President Morgan Tsvangirai addresses a rally at Chibuku Stadium in Chitungwiza Sunday

Thousands who thronged the rally in Chitungwiza Sunday

Mugabe given 30-day ultimatum - President

CHITUNGWIZA - President Morgan Tsvangirai on Sunday warned President Robert Mugabe that his attempts to treat the MDC as a junior partner would backfire, reminding the octogenarian dictator that the MDC had the mandate of the people and as such was not a junior partner.

The rally was President Tsvangirai’s first public address after calling off a three-day disengagement from all forums that the MDC interacted with Zanu PF, namely cabinet and the council of ministers.

The MDC’s disengagement, had sparked a constitutional crisis and immediately thrown Mugabe into an embarrassing legitimacy crisis, which threatened to torpedo the nine-month old fragile inclusive government.

President Tsvangirai said the constitutional crisis spawned by the disengagement of the MDC from all executive forums over the past month was enough proof that the party was not a junior partner in government.

“If you want this inclusive government to deliver hope to the people of Zimbabwe, then you must regard the MDC as an equal partner not as a junior partner,” President Tsvangirai told cheering supporters in Chitungwiza, a domitory town 25 km southeast of Harare.

“We are not a junior partner when we have the mandate of the people. If Zanu PF thought that we were not serious, they have experienced a lesson,” the President said amid thunderous applause. “We are not a junior partner in the inclusive government as we have the mandate of the people. We did not get into government because of the generosity of Zanu PF.”

He said the SADC troika had concurred with the MDC and said the party was justified in disengaging as a number of outstanding issues in the GPA and the 2 January SADC Communiqués.

Under the two legality binding agreements, Zanu PF is stalling the reversal of the unilateral appointment of the partisan Attorney-General, Johannes Tomana and the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe governor, Dr. John G. Gomola, who has plundered the national economy.

Other outstanding issues include the delay in swearing-in Senate Roy Bennett as Deputy Agriculture minister designate. Five MDC officials must also be appointed provincial governors.

President Tsvangirai also bemoaned the continued persecution of MDC officials citing the recent incarceration of MDC transport minister, Pascal Gwezere on trumped-up charges of stealing weapons of war.

“We believe and trust that it is a solution that offers Zimbabweans and the GPA a fresh impetus and a new opportunity that offers Zimbabweans and the GPA a fresh impetus and a new opportunity,” Hon. Biti added.

“We have come a long way, both as a party and as prime minister, we will not be shaken.”

The decision by the MDC to suspend disengagement last Thursday followed a crippling boycott of three consecutive cabinet and council of ministers’ meetings with Mugabe and his Zanu PF party.

Earlier, secretary general Hon. Tendai Biti had said in a statement issued after the SADC troika summit that the MDC believed that the process of resolving outstanding issues within 30 days should be given a chance.

“We want a 50-50 representation of women on all platforms of decision-making. So we need to pen that down in the new Constitution,” said President Tsvangirai.

Meanwhile, more than 5 000 people attended an MDC rally at Shawasha grounds in Mbare on Saturday.

The rally was meant for the party leadership to brief the people on issues affecting Mbare residents such as the controversial issue of the Mopedzamhuna flea market, where Zanu PF bigwigs are resisting a transparent allocation of the market stalls.

Speaking at the rally, Senator Komichi applauded the people of Mbare for fighting for democratic change through non-violent means. He dismissed claims by Zanu PF that the party was linked to 20 AK-47 rifles that have disappeared from the highly-secured Pomona Army Barracks.

“We should be shaken,” Senator Komichi said. “The MDC will never pull up arms against the people who voted for them, and these are the majority of Zimbabweans. We do not need guns, we need the ballot,” he said, amid applause.

Speaking at the same rally, the Secretary for Labour, who is also the Minister for Labour and Social Welfare, Hon. Paurina Mpariwa said the inclusive government had brought hope to the people of Zimbabwe especially the youth who are now getting employed.

“Now that we are in the inclusive government, young people are going to work as more companies are re-opening and operating,” she said.

She urged the women and the youth to participate in the Constitution-making process to ensure that it reflects the will of the people of Zimbabwe.

“We want a 50-50 representation of women on all platforms of decision-making. So we need to pen that down in the new Constitution,” said Hon. Mpariwa.
Several cases of ammunition and rifles were brought into the High Court as evidence with the partisan Attorney General Johannes Tomana telling the court that the case was “a very serious matter which must be treated with the seriousness it demands”. Bennett, 52, who pleaded not guilty through a previous hearing, is being represented by leading human rights lawyers Heathcote, Trust Maanda and Harrison Nkomo. On Monday the case was adjourned after legal arguments over the admissibility of evidence from the State’s star witness, Mike Hitchens, a registered armed dealer who was convicted of the illegal possession of weapons in 2007.

Bennett, who was in court with his wife, Heather, is facing charges of plotting to kill President Robert Mugabe in 2006, and has been accused of being linked to an arms cache security forces claim to have unearthed in Materie. The State claims Bennett and Hitchenshaim wanted to use the arms to destabilise the government.

Hitchens says he implicated Bennett in the alleged coup plot after he was viciously tortured by State security agents.

“He (Hitchenshaim) has disowned that statement and does not want to testify for the state,” one of Bennett’s lawyers Trust Maanda said. “The judge is expected to make his ruling on Wednesday.

Bennett was arrested on the weapons charges on February 13 as he returned from self-imposed exile to take up his post in the inclusive government, and was only released on bail in March. Bennett was then re-arrested on the same charges last month, only to be released on bail.

Bennett’s malicious prosecution is one of several issues which led the MDC to cut off communication with Mugabe and Zanu PF in the coalition government. The three-day boycott was called off last Thursday, after the intervention of regional bloc, SADC.

Bennett trial adjourned to Wednesday

HARARE - MDC Senator and deputy Agriculture minister-designate Roy Bennett had his terrorism trial adjourned yesterday.

The malicious prosecution of Senator Bennett, who is accused of terrorism, insurgency, sabotage and banditry in a case that is clearly politically motivated, will now take place tomorrow, Wednesday.

“MDC MP dies in tragic crash

Masaiti urges 50-50 gender balance in leadership

Gweru - The MDC National Women Assembly executive has urged women to fully participate in the revived Constitution-making process so that their rights are adequately incorporated in the new governance charter.

The team, which was led by Women’s Assembly secretary, Hon. Evelyn Masaiti, said women should fight up as mothers, build up the nation, "as a labor-backed party, the MDC respects the rights and freedoms of workers. The arrest of Malombe is an indictment of the inclusive government especially coming at a time when investors and the international community had begun to have confidence in the economy."

The MDC is calling for this to be a genuine public process - with ordinary people to be used as the template for deliberations and relegates women’s rights to the periphery to be used as the template for the new governance charter.

Women representation remains a major issue countrywide. Speaking at the same rally, Women’s Assembly Deputy executive team has urged women to fully participate in the new post-independence Constitution, after Cabinet and less than 20 percent going to women being appointed into national assemblies.

Masaiti spoke as Zimbabwe was deliberating on the long running process towards creating a new constitution, after Parliament agreed to inject US$1.3 million in tranches.

The new governance charter is expected to replace the existing document which the Gweru-based Constitution talks sat at Lancaster House in London in 1979.

In February, the process of writing a new post-independence Constitution began amid frenzied participation after the formation of an inclusive government.

But the process hit a snag three months ago because of a funding shortfall and sharp differences on the choice of the document to be used as the template. Robert Mugabe and Zanu PF want the Kariba Draft, which bestows extensive executive powers on Mugabe and relegates women’s rights to the periphery to be used as the template for the new governance charter.

MDC said women had a major challenge in ensuring that the new Constitution allowed women to access control and ownership of land and other natural resources and to protect dispensation gave first preference to men.

"As women we should not be sidelined in farm and mine ownership, we should take leading roles and break patriarchal dominance," said Hon. Matenga. The Women’s Assembly executive team also included Hon. Lynette Kore. Chimanimani West, Sunningdale MP, Hon. Enah Mtandila and Homun Chiripara. 2006, and has been accused of being linked to an arms cache security forces claim to have unearthed in Materie. The State claims Bennett and Hitchenshaim wanted to use the arms to destabilise the government.

The MDC is calling for this to be a genuine public process - with ordinary people to be used as the template for deliberations and relegates women’s rights to the periphery to be used as the template for the new governance charter.

Women representation remains a major issue countrywide. Speaking at the same rally, Women’s Assembly Deputy executive team has urged women to fully participate in the new post-independence Constitution, after Cabinet and less than 20 percent going to women being appointed into national assemblies.

Masaiti spoke as Zimbabwe was deliberating on the long running process towards creating a new constitution, after Parliament agreed to inject US$1.3 million in tranches.

The new governance charter is expected to replace the existing document which the Gweru-based Constitution talks sat at Lancaster House in London in 1979.

In February, the process of writing a new post-independence Constitution began amid frenzied participation after the formation of an inclusive government.

But the process hit a snag three months ago because of a funding shortfall and sharp differences on the choice of the document to be used as the template. Robert Mugabe and Zanu PF want the Kariba Draft, which bestows extensive executive powers on Mugabe and relegates women’s rights to the periphery to be used as the template for the new governance charter.

MDC said women had a major challenge in ensuring that the new Constitution allowed women to access control and ownership of land and other natural resources and to protect dispensation gave first preference to men.

"As women we should not be sidelined in farm and mine ownership, we should take leading roles and break patriarchal dominance," said Hon. Matenga. The Women’s Assembly executive team also included Hon. Lynette Kore. Chimanimani West, Sunningdale MP, Hon. Enah Mtandila and Homun Chiripara. 2006, and has been accused of being linked to an arms cache security forces claim to have unearthed in Materie. The State claims Bennett and Hitchenshaim wanted to use the arms to destabilise the government.

The MDC is calling for this to be a genuine public process - with ordinary people to be used as the template for deliberations and relegates women’s rights to the periphery to be used as the template for the new governance charter.

Women representation remains a major issue countrywide. Speaking at the same rally, Women’s Assembly Deputy executive team has urged women to fully participate in the new post-independence Constitution, after Cabinet and less than 20 percent going to women being appointed into national assemblies.

Masaiti spoke as Zimbabwe was deliberating on the long running process towards creating a new constitution, after Parliament agreed to inject US$1.3 million in tranches.

The new governance charter is expected to replace the existing document which the Gweru-based Constitution talks sat at Lancaster House in London in 1979.

In February, the process of writing a new post-independence Constitution began amid frenzied participation after the formation of an inclusive government.

But the process hit a snag three months ago because of a funding shortfall and sharp differences on the choice of the document to be used as the template. Robert Mugabe and Zanu PF want the Kariba Draft, which bestows extensive executive powers on Mugabe and relegates women’s rights to the periphery to be used as the template for the new governance charter.

MDC said women had a major challenge in ensuring that the new Constitution allowed women to access control and ownership of land and other natural resources and to protect dispensation gave first preference to men.

"As women we should not be sidelined in farm and mine ownership, we should take leading roles and break patriarchal dominance," said Hon. Matenga. The Women’s Assembly executive team also included Hon. Lynette Kore. Chimanimani West, Sunningdale MP, Hon. Enah Mtandila and Homun Chiripara. 2006, and has been accused of being linked to an arms cache security forces claim to have unearthed in Materie. The State claims Bennett and Hitchenshaim wanted to use the arms to destabilise the government.