
**Solidarity speech by the Prime Minister of Zimbabwe, the Right Hon.
Morgan Tsvangirai, at the occasion of the Congress of the Zimbabwe
Congress of Trade Unions
*Bulawayo; 19 August 2011***

The President of the ZCTU, Mr. Lovemore Matombo

The Secretary-General of the ZCTU, Mr. Wellington Chibhebhe

Members of the ZCTU General Council

Representatives of Affiliate Unions

Invited Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is with great privilege and honour that I stand before you to give my
solidarity remarks at this elective Congress of the Zimbabwe Congress of
Trade Unions.

I never thought I would stand to give a solidarity speech at a ZCTU function, because I have never thought of myself as a guest within the community of workers which I regard as my home.

Because one can never give a solidarity message in their own house. We are never guests in our own homes and I simply regard the ZCTU as my home!

So I am happy that today, you have gathered to deliberate on important issues affecting the workers of our country and the people of Zimbabwe who are still struggling to get jobs, food, decent shelter and affordable health and education.

As a politician, I know that the problem with Congresses such as this one is that delegates choose to focus on the elections and sideline other important issues that affect the constituencies they represent.

We often do the same in our cut-throat business of politics to the extent that we concentrate more on the competition rather than the rejuvenation of our collective aspiration at Congresses!

So you must be issue-oriented rather than position-oriented. The country is facing many challenges that are of interest and concern to the workers and they should rise up to the occasion.

I hope that at this Congress, the welfare of the workers will not be tucked at the back-seat of your attention and debate while you focus on competition amongst yourselves for positions within the ZCTU.

I want to say from the outset that I am personally not happy with the state of our economy especially with regards to our failure to create jobs.

I am equally unhappy with our failure to decisively address the working conditions of the government's patriotic work-force: the civil servants.

Because of my background as a trade unionist, I am certainly not happy to be part of a government that fails to adequately pay its workers even though the issue of ghost workers and non-transparent sales of our diamonds have led to our failure to remunerate them to their satisfaction.

But my frustrations must be measured in the context of the nature and limitations of a coalition government where there are no shared values, no shared principles and no shared vision.

Equally, our frustrations must not blind us from the little progress we have registered to date including the return of food on our shelves, the re-opening of health and education facilities and the return of a semblance of dignity. A semblance of dignity since the trying times when we all had a constant and common meal of *chakata* for our breakfast, lunch and dinner.

But I am a trade unionist to the core and I share everyone's concerns here that we have largely failed to revive industry and to create jobs for the over 80 percent unemployed people in this country.

And I know that as government, we have an important role in making sure that the workers' dreams are fulfilled.

Your theme for this Seventh National Congress, **Respect Our Rights, Save the Economy and Our Jobs**, is more of a message to us.

A message to us in government to respect people's rights, to save this economy and to create an enabling environment for job creation in the national interest.

I have traversed the country's provinces and visited many factories and industries, particularly those industries that made life tick in some of our major cities and towns. Textile industries, mines and major conglomerates have basically died with disastrous consequences to the workers and the towns where those industries are located.

Kadoma, Chegutu, Bulawayo and other major cities and towns risk complete de-industrialisation if we do not play our part to resuscitate industry and create employment.

I have noted that the problems are the same.

At the centre of our crisis are factories using antiquated machinery procured in the 1940s even in this brave 21st century where modern equipment and technology could go a long way in maximizing production.

There is therefore need for a massive recapitalization and reconstruction programme to create employment and revive our dead factories and industries.

So we are all certain about the challenges we face but our major problem is our toxic and poisonous politics.

Because how do you convince banks and investors to pour money into this economy when you are threatening businesses with an ill-timed and ill-thought out indigenization law?

How do you convince investors to put their money in your country and create employment when there is no policy consistency or policy predictability?

When one half of government is arresting and brutalising the other?

When there is so much violence that even Honourable Members of Parliament are beaten up in the august House and nothing happens to the perpetrators?

So I am very much aware of the challenges facing the country, the workers, the students, the housewives, business and ordinary Zimbabweans in the villages, in urban areas, on the farms and on the mines.

These are problems that can only be solved when we finish the political processes currently being shepherded by SADC to ensure a free and fair election in this country. It is only a free and fair election that can yield a legitimate government that can be able to address the concerns coming from the various sectors, workers included.

So we must all support the need for a roadmap to a legitimate election so that we can have a credible and legitimate government that can truly

Respect Our Rights, Save the Economy and Our Jobs.

The workers are the only ones who can guarantee a constant check on politics and politicians to ensure continued commitment to the values of the liberation struggle and our collective struggle for true democracy and freedom in Zimbabwe.

The fundamental challenge for the labour movement is that the State must create an environment for freedom of association, freedom of movement, and other freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution. Therefore the fight for workers' rights must not be left to politicians alone.

You must not be apologetic in fighting for your rights because if you do so, you may lose the gains that you may have gained as workers due to bad laws that inhibit the enjoyment of the profits reaped at the workplace.

Due to the economic difficulties, there have been calls to create labour market flexibility. I have no problems with this policy as long as such a policy is based on social dialogue and social contract so that everyone makes the sacrifices required and not just the workers.

You are an important cog in the social dialogue and therefore take your rightful place confidently and fight for your rights. Do not therefore delegate your responsibility- that of championing change at the workplace and in the governance of your country- to politicians.

Labour is the only class that remains consistent and not subject to the vagaries of political weather. But perhaps the important question is whether we have not, as the ZCTU, reached a stage of demobilization in the face of all these national challenges?

The national democratic struggle has not ended and confrontation is healthy, as long as it is confrontation with purpose.

The workers should be at the centre of demanding true democracy and freedom in order to keep the politicians on their toes in their national responsibility to deliver to the people.

We are in this together. We will struggle together and we must together share our sorrows and our laughter as we progress towards a New Zimbabwe and a new beginning.

The ZCTU was the biggest investor into the people's project called the MDC and we hope to continue to walk and work together to find a lasting solution to the challenges we face.

Hatiregei kuputsa chirongo tasvika.

I thank You