

PRIME MINISTER



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Major boost for schools

PM launches distribution of 13 million textbooks, stationery kits

Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai has launched a US\$50 million scheme through the Education Transition Fund (ETF), which will support all primary schools across the country with textbooks and stationery kits.

The scheme will benefit about 5 575 schools countrywide, in what ranks as one of the biggest educational interventions since independence.

The distribution of 13 million textbooks, 9 400 stationery kits and 11 000 cabinets comes in line with Prime Minister Tsvangirai's one book per pupil policy. Currently, around 10 pupils are forced to share one text book, while 20% of all primary schools do not possess any English or Mathematics textbooks.

Speaking at the launch of the Education Transition Fund Learning Materials Distribution on Wednesday, Prime Minister Tsvangirai said the Government's main priority was to restore the education sector to its previous glory.

"We have the Government work programme in which we have prioritised education funding within our national budget and this, together with the enormous support we have received from our friends in the international community, is now having tangible results," he said.

The Prime Minister said last year in September the Government, working with the United Nations, development partners and donors, made a commitment to kick start education sector reform to improve equitable access and the quality of education in the country.

"Today's launch of the distribution of stationery and text books is not only evidence that this Government is determined to deliver on our promises but also stands as testament to the power of partnerships in realising the goal of rebuilding our nation," he said.

He said the aim of ETF was to ensure that every Zimbabwean child in primary school has a text book in all the four key subjects, English, Mathematics, Environmental Science, Shona or Ndebele.

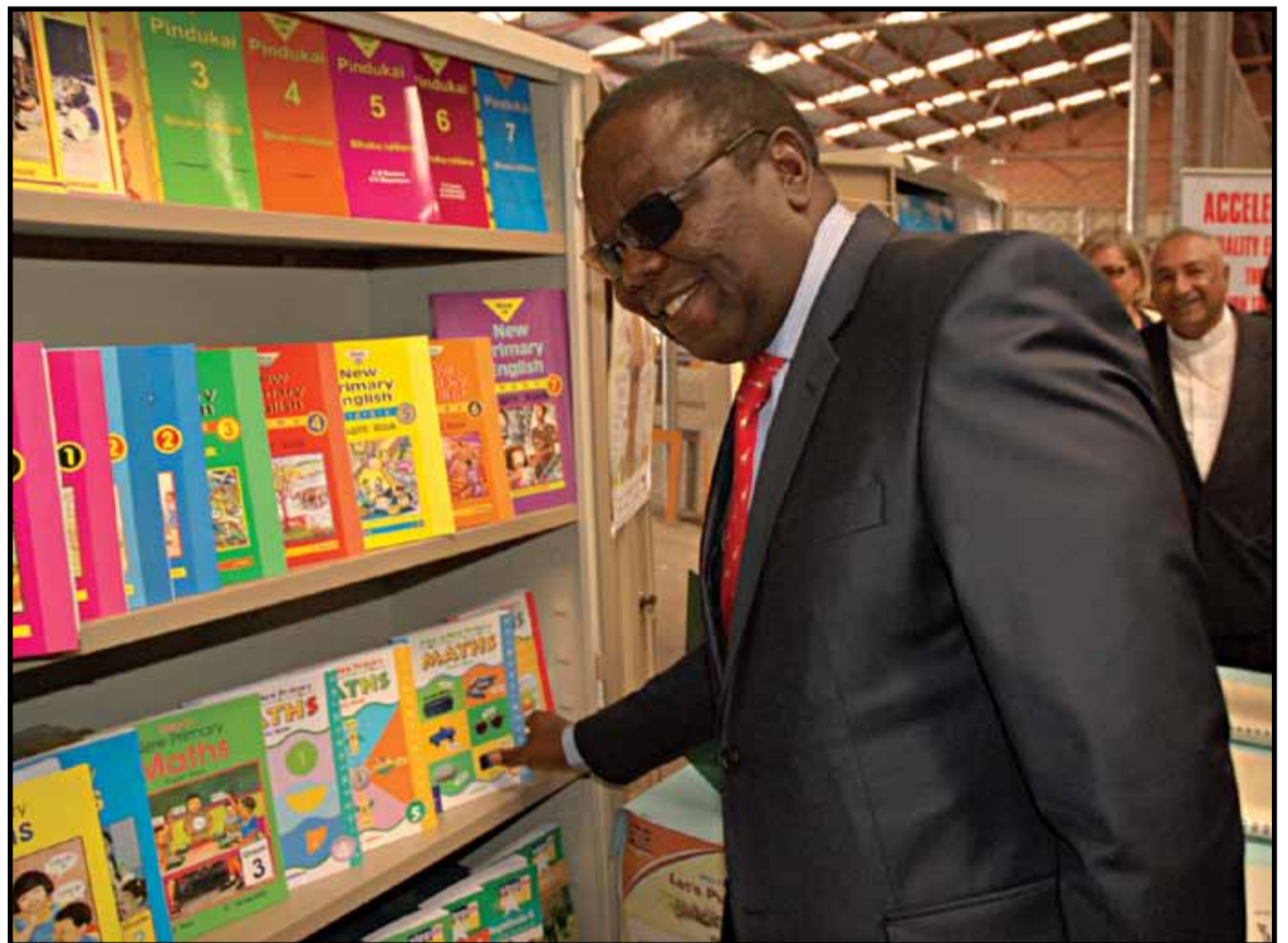
Prime Minister Tsvangirai also reiterated the need to improve the implementation and governance structures of the Basic Educational Assistant Module (BEAM).

"There is need to ensure that the most vulnerable are indeed benefiting from the limited resources that both Government and donors are making available today and in the years to come."

"Secondly, there is need to make sure that the distributed resources are well taken care of. School Development Committees as well as the school authorities need to ensure that these books are kept and maintained in schools," he said.

The Prime Minister emphasized the need for a massive investment in teachers and curriculum development as the two were the most credible and sustainable conduits of knowledge.

"I am aware of the problems in our schools and we have agreed as Government that we should come up with a flexible formula to ensure that we have adequate teachers in our schools to ensure we



Prime Minister Tsvangirai inspecting some of the textbooks at the launch of the Education Transition Fund Learning Materials Distribution in Harare yesterday

come down to the appropriate teacher to pupil ration in line with the overall Government strategy on education," he said.

Education, Sport, Arts and Culture Minister, David Coltart, said the ETF project was going to improve the quality of education in the country. He expressed gratitude to the donor community for pledging and securing funds worth more than US\$50 million.

"Children are our future. Let us provide them with the education they need, which is a basic human right and all other Child Rights as enshrined in the Convention of the Rights of the Child. This position will enhance the Government's capacity to achieve the Millennium Development Goals," said Coltart.

The Minister said there was need to honour and create safe working conditions for teachers: "Without committed teachers there is no quality education," he said, adding that one of his ministry's primary focus for 2011 was to improve sanity in schools.

UNICEF representative in Zimbabwe, Peter Salama, said essential supplies like stationery kits had already been procured for every school and for every primary school age child and the distribution will be completed by the end of the month.

"No longer will children in Zimbabwe need to write in the dirt. In addition, more than 13 million textbooks have been procured and from today will be distributed to the 5 500 primary schools," he said.

"The UN, civil society and the international donor community that we celebrate here today is poised to transform educational opportunities for children and help rebuild Zimbabwe's proudest post-independence achievement, a high quality and equitable education system," said Salama.

United Nations resident and humanitarian coordinator, Alain Noudehou, said the country had made an improvement in the education sector. He, however, noted some challenges in educating the girl child.

Representing the donor community, Norwegian Ambassador Gunnar Foreland, said the project was a clear proof of their commitment to reach out to the people of Zimbabwe.

"We are aware of the crisis in the education sector. As the donor community we will do our part in rebuilding the educational sector," he said.

Vice Child President Muneni Chirinda expressed gratitude for the books and stationery.

"The situation we face as a nation has left Zimbabwean children gasping for air. The lack of adequate resources has resulted in a class of 35 students sharing 10 textbooks," he said.

Over the past decade the education sector in the country had collapsed. ETF is the first large scale external support to the education sector and will provide learning resources to every primary school.

The next phase of the ETF will focus on providing teachers guides, textbooks for marginalised indigenous languages, Braille and secondary schools. The resources are also complimented by resources provided to revitalize BEAM, which is now providing fees and levies for more than 500 000 orphans and vulnerable children.

The ETF was made possible by assistance from the European Commission, Australia, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, New Zealand, Sweden, United Kingdom and United States.



Prime Minister Tsvangirai chats with Mdara John Mutambu who is recovering from a leg injury at Parirenyatwa Hospital yesterday

PM meets World Vision, UN Rep

Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai on Monday met with the new World Vision national director Edward Brown and Alain Noudehou, the United Nations Development Programme Resident Representative and humanitarian coordinator.

Speaking to journalists after a closed door briefing with the Prime Minister, Noudehou said the purpose of his visit was to cement the relationship between the transitional Government and United Nations.

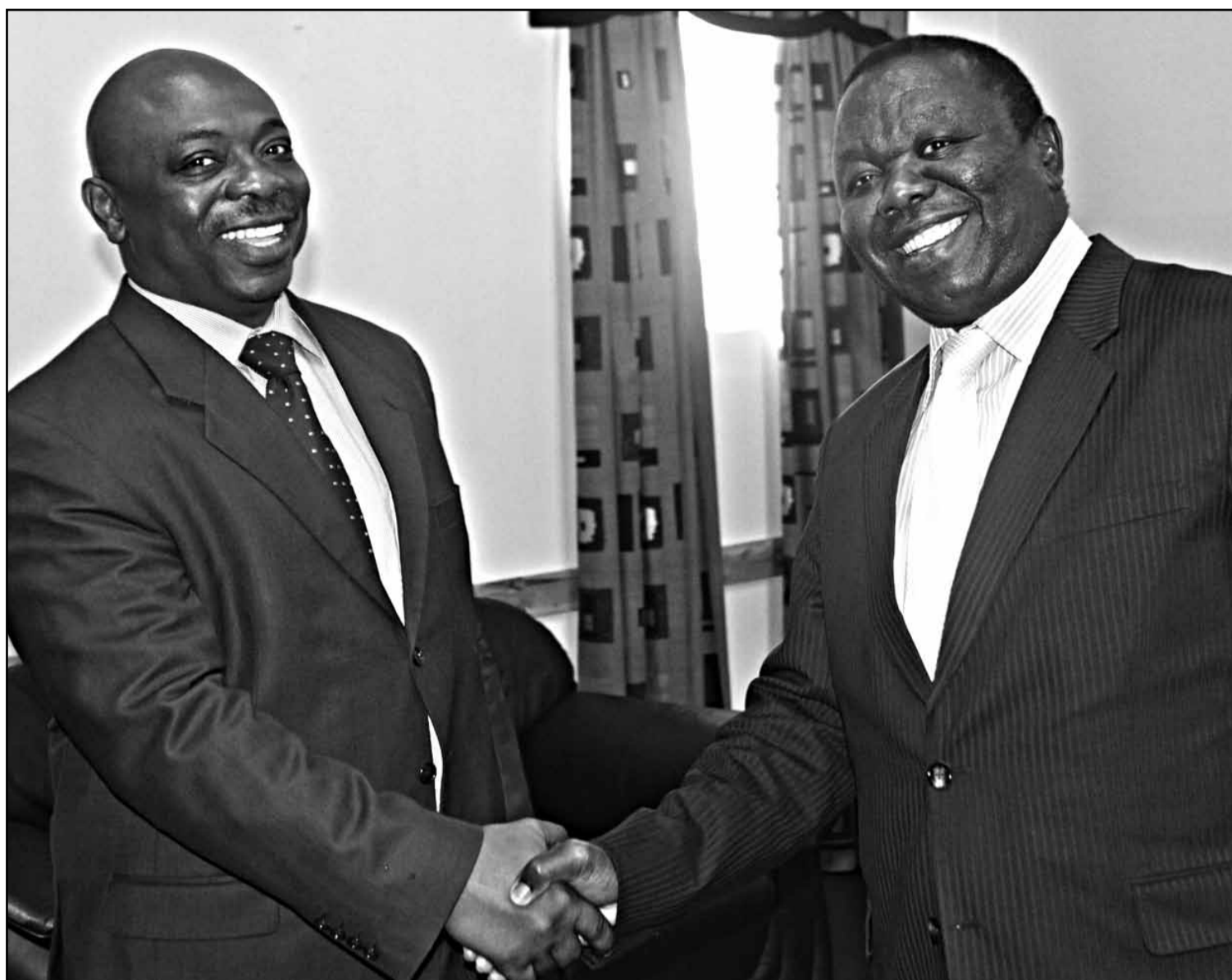
“I have been in the country for two months. My visit today was to talk to the Prime Minister about actions of the Government and how we as United Nations will support the efforts of the Zimbabwean Government. We have an understanding of how we do that because we have put in place a plan of action that we are supporting,” he said.

The humanitarian coordinator said his visit was fruitful as UN had a good relationship with Prime Minister Tsvangirai.

“I am very pleased with the visit, the Prime Minister understands what the country is going through. We are going to work together to make sure that what we are doing here in Zimbabwe is supported by the United Nations,” he said.

The new World Vision national director Brown said he had come to introduce himself to the Prime Minister.

“It was a courtesy visit. I was introducing myself to the Prime Minister as well as to have a broader meeting with him in relation to how NGOs are working in the country,” said Brown.



Prime Minister Tsvangirai welcomes UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator Alain Noudehou

EU releases more aid

Zimbabwe will receive a US\$20.4 million (€16 million) aid package from the European Union (EU), a move that confirms the 27 nation bloc's status as one of Zimbabwe's primary donors.

The EU last week approved the package under its so-called Vulnerability Support for Fluctuations in Export Earnings (V-FLEX) mechanism, and allocated a total of US\$338 million to 19 African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries in order to help them cope with their financial and economic problems due to their poor resilience to external shocks.

The programme complements loan initiatives by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and regional development banks. It works on financial forecasts in order to give support to affected countries in helping to ease the impact rather than acting after the damage is done.

“Developing countries continue to face difficulties, including funding gaps in their government's budgets, as a direct consequence of the global financial crisis. This year, this EU mechanism will help 19 ACP countries maintain their level of public spending in priority areas, and therefore mitigate the social impact of the economic downturn,” EU Commissioner for Development Andris Piebalgs said.

For Zimbabwe, it was the first time to receive money under this programme, as the country was left out in the first round last year December due to the ongoing political dispute about outstanding power-sharing issues, with President Robert Mugabe unwilling to give into arrangements provided for in the Global Political Agreement.

Furthermore, the EU condemned Mugabe's unwillingness to embark on reforms.

The EU's move to benefit Zimbabwe now can be seen as acknowledgement of the progress made so far by the transitional Government led by Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai.

Zimbabwe and the European Union are currently engaged in talks to normalise their relations which went sour over the implementation of targeted measures against Mugabe and his allies.

The transitional Government qualified for the allocation from Brussels because of the severe difficulties to finance its economic reconstruction programme. Finance Minister Tendai Biti announced in his budget that the country still needs funding of another US\$800 million.

Zimbabwe, still struggling with cash flow, will receive the fifth largest allocation out of the 19 beneficiaries. Larger sums were given to the DRC, which got €50 million, Haiti €26 million, Lesotho €21 million and Malawi €19 million.

The money will be paid in the form of budget support which enables Treasury to maintain its levels of public spending in priority areas, including in the social sectors, without jeopardising macroeconomic stability.

Other countries to benefit from the financial support are – upon their request - Antigua & Barbuda, Benin, Burundi, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Grenada, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Samoa, Sierra Leone, Togo, Tonga and Tuvalu.

Tobacco output doubled

Zimbabwe's tobacco output has doubled in the 2009/10 season, giving impressive evidence that the country's economy is recovering since Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai formed the transitional Government 18 months ago.

Zimbabwe Tobacco Industry and Marketing Board (TIMB) chief executive officer Andrew Matibiri confirmed that the growers had produced 119.4 million kg of tobacco in the current season, compared to 58.6 million kg the year before.

“The sales have realised US\$347 million, at an average of US\$2.91 per kg,” said Matibiri/

According to the TIMB CEO, the output could even rise to 120 million kg by the end of the season this Friday. This year's level of tobacco production allows for positive forecasts for next year. Matibiri said that seed sales recorded so far could lead to a yield of up to 200 million kg, if rains and other conditions are favourable.

Although this year's output is still far off the peak of 236 million kg in 2000, it is a clear sign of recovery, especially given the fact that

the tobacco yield had fallen to only 48 million in 2007/8.

In the last decade, tobacco growers, along with other farmers in Zimbabwe, faced enormous damage due to President Robert Mugabe's chaotic land reform programme, which nearly destroyed the commercial farming sector to which most of the tobacco growers belong. The land seizures brought about an economic downfall with inflation peaking at 500 million percent in December 2008, a development that was only stopped when Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai took over as Head of Government.

Today, it is no longer the large commercial operations producing the bulk of the crop. According to official figures, over 40 000 small-scale black farmers produced 70 percent of this year's tobacco crop. The remainder was from large-scale commercial farmers.

The market for Zimbabwean tobacco has also shifted. Whereas buyers from the European Union are still the biggest buyers, industry officials now estimate that one third of the crop is sold to Chinese buyers.

State media holds Zimbabweans hostage

Zimbabweans are still overfed on propaganda in the State media, a new report by South Africa-based organisation Gender Links reveals.

According to the report, titled "Taking Stock: Southern Africa Media Progress Study (Zimbabwe)", elements in the transitional Government are still preventing the promotion of media freedom and diversity.

"Zimbabweans remain overfed on government propaganda. The country's media wasteland is further demonstrated by the fact that though Zimbabwe's constitution guarantees all citizens the right to freedom of expression and information, the public media is still shackled to political control, still enjoys a de facto monopoly of the news market and present a narrow perspective of the Zimbabwean story, in complete violation of their mandate to serve all shades of national opinion," Gender Links judges in their 129-page report.

In turn, the study finds that the monopoly of the State media handicaps the influence of private media.

"Although the private print and electronic media, including the mushrooming Zimbabwean news websites, have tried to fill the glaring information gap left by the public media, they can hardly quench Zimbabweans' thirst for news and information on issues affecting their livelihoods."

"This is because they are niche market sources of information that cannot match the dominant public media's daily rate of disseminating information," the report says, citing the massive output of State publications compared to smaller private media houses.

The study blasts the failure by political parties to keep their promises regarding freedom of speech and media made in the Global Political Agreement.

Despite slamming the ongoing rule and misuse of State media, the report also applauds Zimbabwe. Although appearing to be a paradox, Zimbabwe is southern Africa's leading country with regard to journalistic standards.

"At 92 percent primary and 2 percent secondary sources Zimbabwe is the best performer in the region against this indicator. The media in the country also use few anonymous sources (11 percent). This shows that despite the harsh operating environment the media in the country still adheres to basic journalism standards," the report says.

According to Gender Links, it would be healthy for Zimbabwe to see more community media established as those "would give voice to the people in the community. Given the size of the country, there should be more media to ensure a diversity of voices."

The study is also concerned with the status of women in the media and the coverage of health issues. However, regarding women the report notes hardly any development: "There has not been any significant improvement in the performance of the country with women

sources only increasing from 15 percent seven years ago to 16 percent at the time of the recent study. This means the figure is still distinctively lower than the regional average of 19% and the global average of 24%."

The report furthermore reveals that coverage of HIV and AIDS issues has declined from 3% in 2006 to currently 2%. "While voices of those affected are heard at 58%, it is worrying that people living with the HIV and AIDS only account for 4 percent of sources. However, the shift from official and UN agencies (from 44 percent in 2006 to now 4 percent) to persons affected (from 6 percent to now 58 percent) is a positive development," the report says.

The study with a Zimbabwean focus is part of a regional survey that covered 14 countries in Southern Africa and 33265 news items. It is a follow up to the Gender and Media Baseline Study (GMBS) conducted in 2003, as well as the HIV and AIDS and Gender Baseline Study (2006) and the Francophone Gender, HIV and AIDS and Media Study (2008).

'Food aid will be apolitical'

Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai pledged last week that food assistance to drought-stricken citizens will be apolitical.

The Prime Minister, represented by his Deputy, Thokozani Khupe, made this promise at the launch of a nationwide Food Deficit Mitigation Strategy, giving hope to those Zimbabweans affected by drought.

The Prime Minister reinforced his commitment and his promises made during his food assessment tour earlier this year, during which he visited drought-stricken regions.

The mitigation strategy aims at enhancing effectiveness and fairness of programmes to ease food shortages.

At the launch, DPM Khupe made clear that this programme and all distribution of food aid will and has to be apolitical. No beneficiary is to be chosen due to his or her political beliefs, DPM Khupe promised, taking into account the fears of many people of going away empty handed for not supporting the former ruling party.

In order to ensure that political partisanship in the selection of beneficiaries of food aid is removed, Cabinet has agreed that District Drought Relief Committees will transparently identify deserving households at village level through community selected and gender-equal food distribution committees, which are assisted by locally operating NGOs, CBOs, village and church elders.

DPM Khupe also said that, in order to promote the fairness of the programme, no free food handouts will be made to households with adult members who are able to work. Households headed by older or chronically ill persons or by children will receive free cash or free food to ease their situation. Households headed by persons earning an income will access food through improved market distribution.

DPM Khupe announced that the programme has already been implemented in seven severely affected districts, amongst them Gwanda, using an initial US\$2 million input. According to Khupe, more districts will be added soon.

Meanwhile DPM Khupe last Saturday officiated at the opening of the Gwanda Agricultural Show. Expressing enthusiasm at the setting and performance of the exhibitors, she encouraged participants "to fully exploit the resources in this area through either private partnerships or public private partnerships for the benefit of this region and the country as a whole".

"You need to develop a road map that will even include local colleges offering geological courses so that children from this region get the knowledge and skills on how to exploit the vast minerals that still lie untapped in this part of the country," DPM Khupe said.



DPM Khupe at the Gwanda Agricultural show

The Gwanda Agricultural show brought together over sixty exhibitors from various sectors

including mining, manufacturing, hospitality, service providing, Government Ministries,

Small and Medium Enterprises and agro-based activities.

No freedom without human rights

Deputy Prime Minister Thokozani Khupe has challenged the Government to respect human life and ensure that all people receive decent, humane treatment in a manner that values their human rights and dignity.

Officially launching the peace building and transitional justice project last week, where Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai, constitutional lawyer Lovemore Madhuku, human rights lawyers Beatrice Mtetwa and Alec Muchadehama were honoured for their contributions in defending human rights, people's freedom and promoting peace, DPM Khupe said Zimbabwe needs leaders who appreciate the value of life.

"The men and women whose roles have been recognised tonight are leaders that have respect for human dignity," said DPM Khupe.

"Values bring independence and freedom; and expand the capacity to be self sufficient. Our country needs leaders who have the humility to apologise where we go wrong, for it is through forgiveness that we can find peace and build relationships with the nation and other nations based on trust," she said.

Khupe challenged the nation to join hands and conquer the barriers created by party politics, stigmatisation, stereotyping, gender and race towards building a peaceful conducive environment to enable economic growth.

"Without respect for human rights there is no freedom, there is no human dignity, no justice, no fairness or liberation to talk about," she said.

She also emphasised the need for unity among Zimbabweans to propel the country forward.

"As a country, we cannot move forward unless we mediate on these things. Zimbabwe needs to move forward and this can only be achieved when we join hands and respect each other's human rights."

"Article VII of the Global Political Agreement speaks to the issues of the promotion of equality, national healing, cohesion and unity and it is pleasing that through the unity of these four organisations, we are in fulfilment of that."

Zimbabwe's bruised and battered past, she said, could also not be ignored.

"Today Zimbabwe needs a new constitution, a breath of fresh air and light, a dawn of a new era that will enable this sleeping giant to regain its economic position as the grain basket of Africa. Nothing therefore can be more urgent than the making of a new constitution for Zimbabwe and by Zimbabweans," she said.

The event was organized by Restoration of Human Rights Zimbabwe (ROHR), Centre for Community Development in Zimbabwe (CCDZ), Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe (CCJPZ) and Victim Action Committee (VAC).

In a word of thanks to the organisers, Khupe said the event helped stakeholders "reflect upon the basic principles of humanity".

"As the Deputy Prime Minister, I am alive to the fact that your goal is to promote peace, cohesion, tolerance and national healing."

"This occasion is therefore vital in the sense that it brings together Civil Society and Government and how these two can work together and provide a peaceful environment; a violent free environment which is necessary for economic growth and stability," she said.

Speaking at the same occasion, Home Affairs Co-minister Theresa Makone said the transitional Government was a compromise set up in which people should locate opportunities to forge ahead to bring real change.

ROHR Zimbabwe director Tichanzii Gandanga said the event was aimed at encouraging the nation to assume deliberate efforts in achieving peace and building bridges into the future "to a national vision cemented on democratic principles, respect for human rights, justice, tolerance, core existence and cohesion".

"Peace is an individual effort and inevitable responsibility regardless of political affiliation," he said.

"The launch of the peace building initiative marks a lifetime journey towards brokering strategic relationships among the major stakeholders to peace building with the aim of peace building skills, raising awareness in peace building and national healing," said Ronald Mureverri, ROHR Information and Publicity director.

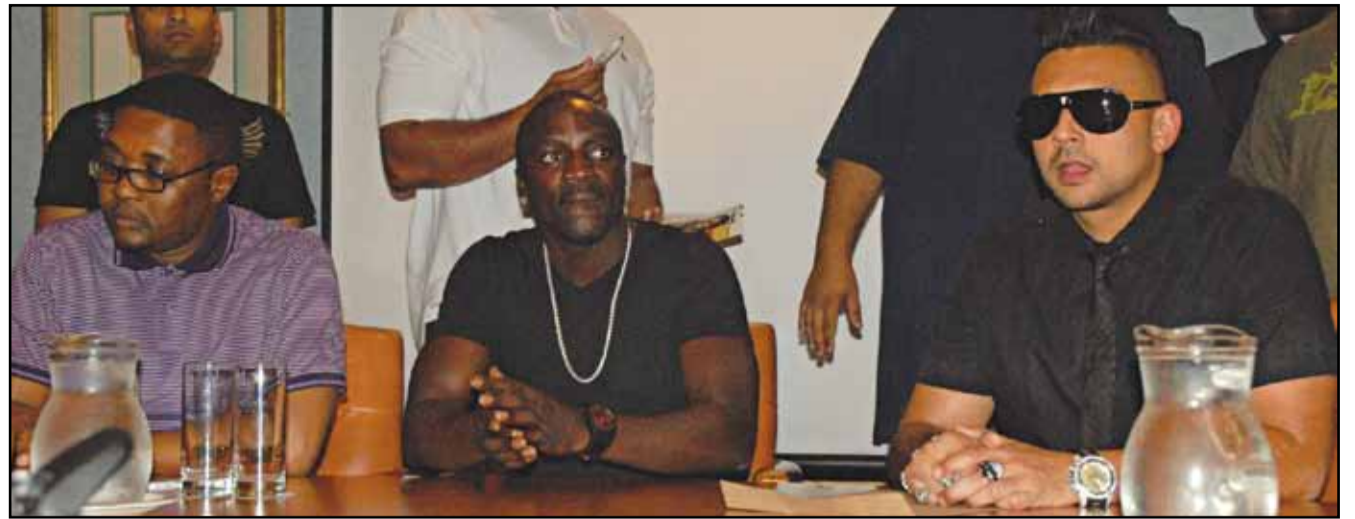
International artists grace Zim

Thousands of people last week thronged the National Sports Stadium for the 'real deal' concert featuring top-notch international musicians Akon and Sean Paul.

The concert was part of ongoing efforts by the transitional Government to market Zimbabwe as a safe tourist and investment destination.

The excitement and enthusiasm shown by thousands of fans who swarmed the stadium transcended race, tribe, age and political differences. And the two artists did not disappoint, giving superb performances that left fans crying out for more.

Since the formation of the transitional Government there have been some improvements as tourists are starting to come to Zimbabwe.



Tourism Minister Walter Mzembi with Akon and Sean Paul during a press conference at Meikles Hotel, last week



Fans crying out for more at the Akon, Sean Paul concert



Local musician Kapfupi with an unidentified man at Meikles Hotel



These fans party the night away at the concert



Akon and Sean Paul rocking the stage at the National Stadium