



Association of Rural District Councils of Zimbabwe

Report

1st Edition of RDCs Councillors Meeting
with His Excellency

17 October 2019

Rainbow Towers

Harare

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1. Executive Summary

The Association of Rural District Councils in collaboration with the Ministry of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing held a one day RDCs Councillors Meeting with His Excellency President Cde. E.D Mnangagwa on the 17th of October 2019. The Conference ran under the theme **“RDCs gearing up for the attainment of Vision 2030.”** The workshop was attended by various Government Ministers, Provincial Development Coordinators, District Development Coordinators, CEOs of Rural District Councils, Head of Departments and all the Rural District Councillors in Zimbabwe.

This Conference was a result of the Association’s request to meet with the President of Zimbabwe following the successful 3rd Rural District Councils Council Chairpersons Indaba held in July this year at the Kingdom Hotel in Victoria Falls

The main objective of the Conference was to highlight the role to be played by RDCs and Councillors in particular towards the attainment of Vision 2030. Vision 2030 enunciated by the President of Zimbabwe E.D Mnangagwa seeks to make Zimbabwe an upper middle income economy, a standard set by the World Bank entailing higher standards of living, lifting the country from its current state after years of economic decline and negative growth. This platform accorded his Excellency and all Councillors the opportunity to converge and deliberate on rural local governance issues. The platform also afforded various Government Ministers a prospect to articulate the National Vision **“Towards a Prosperous and Empowered Upper Middle Class Society by 2030.”**

The delegates were welcomed by the Minister of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing Honourable July Moyo and the Keynote Address was delivered by his Excellency the President of Zimbabwe Cde. E.D Mnangagwa.

The workshop touched some of the teething issues affecting administration of Rural Local Authorities, issues relating to payment of mining royalties to Local Authorities, role of Councillors in the achievement of Vision 2030, update on what various Ministries are doing to uphold the Vision 2030 and improve rural local governance among others. The Conference was viewed as a strategic occasion, meant to harness and consolidate the rural Constituency into gearing up for economic growth towards achievement of the National Vision.

2. Introductory and Welcoming Remarks

The Minister of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing Honourable July Moyo welcomed the delegates to the 1st Edition of the Councillors Conference. He

highlighted that the fact the RDCs houses 70% of the Zimbabwean population is a clear manifestation to the fact that they play a pivotal and fundamental role in the success of Vision 2030 as well as the Devolution Programme introduced by the New Dispensation led by Cde E.D Mnangagwa. In his welcoming speech, Honourable July Moyo also thanked development partners, Gender links, Commonwealth Local Government Forum, and Municipal Development Partnership (MDP) for their financial support.

Concluding his welcoming remarks, Honourable July Moyo emphasised the need for Councillors to cascade the information discussed to lower structures of rural local governance including villages and wards so as to create an organised local government system.

3. Objectives of the Conference

The objectives of the Congress were as follows

- i. To address issues relating to Councillors' Allowances and privileges.
- ii. To apprise Councillors on what various Government Ministries are doing to uphold and ensure the success of Vision 2030 and the Devolution Programme.
- iii. To discuss and interrogate administration issues affecting RDCs.
- iv. To educate Rural Local Authorities on the need to exercise proper conduct in carrying out their duties

4. Updates from Various Government Ministries

Various Government Ministries took turns to update the gathering on what they were doing to ensure the success of Vision 2030 and also to improve rural local governance.

- (a) The Minister of Mines and Mining Development, Hon Winston Chitando was the first to give an update on what his Ministry is doing to ensure Vision 2030 succeeds which is at the centre of development in Zimbabwe. He addressed issues relating to revenue inflows to Local Authorities from the mining sector.

For the gathering to understand the role of the Ministry of Mines and Mining Development in upholding Vision 2030, the Minister made use of three analogies. He made use of a case involving a patient failing sick with malaria at the same time developing a stomach ache, trying to explain the case of the Zimbabwean economy. He highlighted that to cure the economic patient that is the Zimbabwean Economy, there was need for identification of the problem which was done by the Government of the 2nd Republic led by President

Mnangagwa. He also emphasised on the need to practice patience as it takes many stages for the sickness to go away meaning that the economy will not stabilise one day. He also used an analogy of a long journey indicating that Vision 2030 was a long journey which can only be achieved through sacrifice, hard work and commitment. The third analogy involved a covo garden planted to benefit a family. He highlighted that the seeds will germinate to show that there were good seeds. However the garden needs watering, making sure no animals destroy the crop, this highlighted that there is an imperative need for Zimbabweans to fight corruption and work tirelessly to ensure the Vision 2030 is realised which aims to restore economic sanity.

To conclude his speech, the Minister notified the gathering that RDCs now had power to levy taxes to all mining companies in their areas of jurisdiction. He also highlighted that RDCs can no longer renew licences to Mines which do not have updated proof of payment, enhancing this source of revenue for RDCs. He also highlighted that the Ministry of Mines will no longer issue inspection certificates.

(b) The Minister of Lands, Agriculture , Water and Climate Hon P. Shiri

The Minister gave an update on what the Government is doing to ensure the 2019-2020 farming season becomes a success. The Minister also outlined programs introduced by the Government to ensure the success of the upcoming season.

1. Presidential Input Scheme

Honourable Perence Shiri informed the delegates that this program was meant to address food security at household level. He also indicated that the Presidential Inputs Scheme was meant to enable smallholder farmers to become food secure as well as addressing nutritional requirements at household level by availing critical inputs in Rural Areas.

2. Command Agriculture

He also informed the delegates that the Government of Zimbabwe introduced the Command Agriculture scheme in the 2016/17 farming season as a strategy to boost local food production and guarantee food security. He also highlighted that this programme will also help farmers in this upcoming farming season.

3. Government Small Grains Programme

Hon Perence Shiri highlighted that there was need for Zimbabwe to embrace the Government Small Grains Programme which involve growing of drought resistant crops like sorghum, rapoko and millet. He also indicated that the Programme will help or benefit farmers who have always experienced rainfall shortages in the dry parts of the country which are very hot making it difficult for traditional crops like maize to thrive.

He also highlighted that the Government partnered Agribank, CBZ, Stanbic Bank and the Zimbabwe Women's Microfinance Bank to manage and disburse a \$3,2 billion kitty for agriculture, in a new financing model being backed by the private sector. Under the model, Government will guarantee the loans which have a 270-day tenure at interest rates of 10,5 percent per annum and an upfront fee of 2,25 percent.

He also highlighted that the Women's Bank Small Grains Facility will be sponsoring the production of crops including sorghum, millet and rapoko. Stanbic Bank will also be offering an Agricultural Production Loan (APL) which is a short-term credit to help farmers pay for their agricultural input costs. He highlighted that this product is suitable for grain farmers cultivating on either dry land or on an irrigation basis. The loans are offered to individual farmers, groups and legal entities in the agricultural sector, including commercial farmers and agribusinesses. Under this programme, Commercial farmers will be producing for companies like PHI and Northern Farming. He also highlighted that Agribank was also tasked by the Government to support seed and fertiliser production.

Honourable Shiri also addressed issues relating to the water supply situation in the country stating that the water table receded due to the drought situation experienced last season. He encouraged the construction of wares to enhance capacity to harvest water and creation of water bodies. He also highlighted that about 40 000 boreholes are not functional due to the dry season. However, he promised that DDF will ensure the maintenance of the borehole facilities. The Minister also talked about planning of Business Centres. He also highlighted that the planning of service centres was jointly handled by the Ministry of Lands and Ministry of Local Government administered by the Department of Lands. He encouraged Rural District Development Committees to identify service centres to be submitted to the Ministry of Lands. He also urged Local Authorities to support this initiative by approving building plans and issuing trading licences.

Concluding his speech, the Minister informed the delegates that the Government will take all necessary steps to alleviate hunger and poverty in Zimbabwe, which is one of the dictates of Vision 2030.

c.) The Minister of Transport and Infrastructure Development Honourable Joel Biggie Matiza

In his address, the Minister highlighted that Councillors are agents of development therefore they have to make sure that development is not done haphazardly in order to achieve the Vision 2030 Agenda. He also highlighted on the need for RDCs to also take part in the revamping of the Infrastructure which have deteriorated for 20 years. He also emphasised on the need for innovation to achieve infrastructural development. The delegates were also informed that ZINARA now had a new Board and Managerial staff to enhance efficiency to the Four Road Authorities namely DDF, Urban Councils, Rural District Councils and Dept. of Roads. However the Minister expressed dissatisfaction with corruption and leakages at tollgates which hampers the maximum proficiency of ZINARA.

He concluded his speech by promising that CCTV will be employed to ensure that there are no revenue leakages. On the issue of ZINARA Disbursements, he highlighted that allocation takes into account the management of the funds, the allocated budgets, the disbursed funds and acquittals which are not on time. He also talked about the issue of tariffs that there were low resulting in low disbursements.

d.) On behalf of Finance Minister Mthuli Ncube, Mr Mphambela the Chief Director for Communications and Advocacy at the Ministry of Finance delivered an update on the overview of the Transitional Stabilisation Programme. He underscored that the TSP was a solid foundation for attaining the Vision 2030. He also highlighted that, while Zimbabwe remains a unitary State, the implementation of the country's development programmes will allow for devolution to achieve fair and balanced development, spearheaded by Provincial Councils which will initiate development programmes for their respective Provinces, consistent with Section 264 of the Constitution. He also outlined Section 301(3) of the Constitution which support the allocation of not less than 5% from the National Revenue to Local Authorities, which shows that the Government will allocate funds to sponsor the Devolution Programme.

To educate the gathering on the TSP Agenda, the Chief Director highlighted that the Transitional Stabilisation Programme outlined targeted programmes like Devolution to champion economic development across the Provinces which will benefit Rural District Councils at large. He also stated that it will enable all Provinces to plan and implement their economic growth and development making use of resources in their areas. He also stated that the Transitional Stabilisation Programme recognises that there is general low confidence in public institutions which include our public enterprises as well as our local authorities. The Programme, therefore, targets scaling down over-reliance on recourse to unsustainable fiscal interventions and resort to Government guarantees by public entities and local authorities. Concluding his speech, the Chief Director encouraged Local Authorities to introduce prepaid water meters to curb revenue leakages.

e.) Minister of Public Services, Labour and Social Welfare Hon S. Nzenza

Honourable Nzenza thanked all the Councillors for attending the Conference highlighting that they have a significant role to play in achieving a middle class status by 2030. She informed the gathering that the percentage of hunger had increased to 11% compared to last year. She also highlighted that more than 900 000 households need food for survival. However the Ministry is failing to deliver food in different places due to transport problems. In this regard, Councillors were urged to play a significant role to make sure the food aid programme reaches everyone at ward level. Councillors were encouraged to identify families suffering from hunger in their areas of jurisdiction.

She also emphasised the need for Councillors to work with Village heads to make sure problems of hunger and starvation in rural areas are completely dealt with. The Minister also emphasised on food for work programs which aims to support households with able bodied people. She also applauded the support from the Chiefs through the Zunde raMambo Programme which have helped to cushion the those in need of food. Concluding her speech, Dr Nzenza thanked the Ministry of Lands for its assistance in the food aid program. She also highlighted that the Ministry of Public Services is trying to curb hunger so as to uphold the Vision 2030 which is manifested in an environment with food sufficiency. In this regard

Councillors were also urged to take part in the initiative of fighting hunger and identifying household not getting any food aid.

5. Key Note Address

His Excellency Cde E.D Mnangagwa delivered the Keynote Address. In his address, he first talked about the issue of Councillors Allowances which was still a pending issue since the Chairpersons Indaba held in Bulawayo. He indicated that the problem in relation to Councillors been poorly remunerated is a thing of the past as he had resolved all issues during his meeting with the President of the Association Alderman D.G Mutasa. He also highlighted that the agreement made during the meeting will be publicised in a New Circular which clearly outlines that the Circular No. 12 CX/7 of September 2019 was revoked and is no longer functional. The President Cde E.D Mnangagwa also challenged Councillors to work professionally and to be honest in all their dealings to ensure development of RDCs.

The President also touched on welfare issues affecting the generality of the population especially people living in Rural Areas which included:

Basic Commodities Subsidised

- I. He highlighted that in the fight against hunger, the Government had identified seven basic commodities that would be subsidised. These commodities include mealie meal, salt, sugar, cooking oil among others.

Issue of Price Increases

- I. The President also warned business against relentless price increases, saying the Government will be forced to take action against such practises.

Striking Doctors

- III. He also talked about issues relating to doctors who were on strike. He highlighted that some doctors were working with external forces to destabilise the health sector, therefore the Government will take the necessary action to deal with such situations.

Anti-Sanctions Campaign

- IV. The President urged RDCs to participate in various ways on October 25 when SADC nations take part in the solidarity day against illegal sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe by

the Western Community. He also highlighted that the sanctions had wrecked Zimbabwe economy and also negatively impacted on regional economies.

V. Zupco Buses

The President told the people that they will be launching 100 Zupco Buses before end of this month, as the Government continues to work towards cushioning citizens from high transport costs. He also indicated that the buses will be distributed with bias to rural areas as the Government had supplied quite a number of buses to urban areas.

6. Vote of Thanks

The President of the Association of Rural District Councils of Zimbabwe Alderman D.G Mutasa gave the vote of thanks to His Excellency Cde Mnangagwa for gracing the occasion and addressing issues relating to Councillors Allowances.

In his speech the President, expressed gratitude to His Excellency for humbly accepting the Councillors' request to meet and deliberate on critical issues that are pertinent to the cause of good governance and improved service delivery in RDCs

He also highlighted that the standards of living of the Zimbabwean populace is best reflected by the collective performance of Councillors. He also highlighted that having 1569 Councillors directly translate to 1569 Ward Development Plans which detail numerous development priorities from the Zimbabwean 70% population. To show appreciation to his Excellency for gracing the occasion, the ARDCZ President presented a White Braham Bull to His Excellency on behalf of all the Councillors and RDCs present. He also presented a sculpture dubbed "**the Listening President**" to his Excellency for fulfilling his promises and addressing grievances of the RDCs Councillors.

End of Report
