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QUESTION OF SOUTHERN RHODESIA

Statement made by Mr. Josiah Chinamano of the Patriotic Front  
at the 26th meeting of the Fourth Committee on 8 November 1979 1/

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1/ Distributed in accordance with a decision taken by the Fourth Committee at its 26th meeting, on 8 November 1979.

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1. I wish to thank you for allowing us to address the 4th Committee of the General Assembly. Since this Committee took up the question of Southern Rhodesia, the Zimbabwe liberation movement has always enjoyed the support of the United Nations. Mr. Chairman, the people of Zimbabwe, through their liberation movement, the Patriotic Front, appreciate this support which they continue to receive from the United Nations.

2. Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates, today we come back to you to seek assistance **for** our efforts to reach a negotiated settlement to the conflict over our country. You will recall that following the last Commonwealth conference of August 1979 held in Lusaka, Zambia, Britain convened a constitutional Conference to try and resolve the Rhodesian problem. In convening this conference on September 10, 1979, Britain said that she had accepted her full responsibility to decolonize Southern Rhodesia, and that she would put the colony through the same constitutional process by which she had decolonized her other former colonies. But, it must be emphasized that when the Commonwealth Heads of Government, meeting in Lusaka, recognized Britain's legal and constitutional responsibility to grant independence to Zimbabwe, this in itself did not suggest that the Commonwealth was committing itself to backing any constitutional formula or means of granting independence that the British Government would come up with. The Commonwealth was merely associating itself with Britain's efforts to work out an internationally acceptable independence formula for Zimbabwe.

3. When the British Government invited the Patriotic Front and the Salisbury regime to London, they also enclosed in their invitation letter an outline of proposals for an independence constitution.

The Patriotic Front's Response to the London Conference

4. Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates, in accepting the invitation to attend the London Conference, the Patriotic Front made it clear that it was doing nothing more than indicate its willingness to negotiate a solution to the problems of Zimbabwe. As a matter of policy, the Patriotic Front has always been willing to negotiate a settlement if there is an opportunity for such negotiations. But in accepting the invitation to attend the London Conference, the Patriotic Front made it clear its rejection of the proposed constitutional outline enclosed by the British Government in its letter of invitation to the Conference. Mr. Chairman, the Patriotic Front rejected the outline because, in both form and content, the constitutional outline was unmistakably based upon the illegal internal settlement constitution. We also made it clear that there could not be a ceasefire before or during the negotiations in London, because a ceasefire could be achieved as part of a comprehensive agreement of the negotiations.

5. Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates, since the Geneva Conference on Zimbabwe in 1976, the Patriotic Front has maintained the position that a solution to the problems of our country requires a comprehensive agreement involving both a constitution and transitional arrangements including a ceasefire. In other words, we found the British Government's insistence on a constitutional

conference rather than a peace conference unrealistic. Providing a constitution to Zimbabwe without resolving the war situation cannot by itself solve the problems of our country. Because we consider the need to end the war important, we have insisted throughout the talks in London, that the successful implementation of any independence constitutional formula, depends upon the nature of the interim arrangements. This depends upon how parties to the agreement reached at the talks, view the arrangements which will be used to implement the constitution. If one party feels that such interim arrangements are **weighted in favour** of its opponents, this will prejudice the successful implementation of the agreement. Because we want the London talks to result in a viable peace formula for our country, We in the Patriotic Front **have** taken a strong stand in favour of a comprehensive agreement which makes sure that there will not only be an agreement on the independence constitution, but that such a constitution should be successfully implemented. It is for this reason that we have placed such importance on the means of implementing the constitution (the transitional or interim arrangements).

6. Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the 4th Committee, we are aware of Britain's position that the case of Southern Rhodesia is nothing more than an ordinary case of decolonization whose solution entails nothing more than an independence constitution. This simplistic British view of the problem is also shared by Rhodesian settlers and their minority puppet regime, whose objectives in the London talks have been to gain recognition for their illegal independence and to have sanctions lifted unilaterally by Britain. In other words, as far the British Government and the Smith/Muzorewa regime are concerned, the ending of the war is not as immediately

important as the granting of a constitution. Hence, their objective in the current negotiations has been to conclude an agreement on the constitution before handling peace terms. This approach is totally unrealistic, because it fails to take into account the war whose end is critical to the successful implementation of the constitution.

7. The insistence by Britain that the constitution was more important than all other issues in the war, created an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust in that the Patriotic delegation (which wanted to negotiate in good faith) began to suspect that the British were creating problems at the outset of the talks, to lure the Patriotic Front into walking out of the talks, leaving the British Government and the Salisbury regime to work a bilateral deal. Because the Patriotic Front delegation was determined to remain in the talks, it proceeded to present the British delegation with an agenda which included all the items which it believed must be settled by the London conference. The agenda of the London Conference is in fact what the Patriotic Front proposed, although the British Chairman, Lord Carrington modified the order in which the items were finally handled, beginning **with the independence constitution as the first item.**

The British Delegation's Conduct of the Talks:

8. Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates, we have just shown how the British approached the Lancaster House Constitutional Conference on Zimbabwe. We now want to turn to the British conduct of those Talks. Since the talks began on September 10, 1979, Lord Carrington, the Chairman of the Conference has conducted himself more like a mediator between the Patriotic Front and the Salisbury regime, than as a decolonizer, although we are convinced that behind the scenes,

the British delegation has done everything it can do, to assist the ramshackle Salisbury delegation.

9. Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates, you will recall that when the Salisbury delegation arrived in London, it announced that it had come to negotiate with the British, terms of recognition of its illegal independence, and the lifting of sanctions. In the first plenary session of the Lancaster Talks, the Salisbury delegation sought to underscore this objective by refusing to say anything in the meeting, claiming that because it had come to London to talk to the British, it did not believe that it would serve any purpose for it to participate in the plenary deliberations. The Salisbury delegation then suggested that the talks should be organized in bilateral meetings between the British and itself; and between the British and the Patriotic Front. This procedure was quickly accepted and immediately adopted by Lord Carrington.

10. Although the Patriotic Front expressed reservations about this mode of conducting the talks, it decided to go along with the mode of procedure, suggesting that it understood this to mean that only certain issues would be handled in the bilateral talks while the main issues would be handled in the plenary sessions. The Patriotic Front went along with this dubious arrangement in the spirit of good will and cooperation. But no sooner had the bilateral meetings begun, than it became clear that the British delegation and the Salisbury delegation were using these bilateral talks to work out a common strategy against the Patriotic Front. In short, the British used the bilateral talks to play the Salisbury delegation against the Patriotic Front, thereby creating an unhealthy atmosphere for

constructive negotiations. It was because of this arrangement that the Salisbury delegation actually accepted the British constitutional proposals outside the framework of the conference as such. Once the Salisbury delegation announced its acceptance of the British constitutional proposals, the British tried to use this to pressure the Patriotic Front to do the same. The objective here was to present the Salisbury delegation as conciliatory and reasonable, and the Patriotic Front as intransigent and unreasonable.

11. Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates, it should be noted that in reality they have not been any negotiations between the British and the Salisbury delegation at **Lancaster House**. In the first place, given the fact that the British were offering Abel Muzorewa a constitution that was a slight improvement of what he had accepted from Ian Smith in the so-called internal settlement, **one** did not expect Muzorewa to have anything to say against such an offer. In the second place, much of what the British were proposing at the **Lancaster Talks** had already been agreed upon between the Salisbury regime and the British Government in bilateral talks conducted by the latter's Special Representative to Salisbury, Mr. Dereck Day. In short we believe that the British and the Salisbury regime entered the **Lancaster Talks** with an agreement which they had reached bilaterally in Salisbury. This explains why the Salisbury delegation did not produce a single original document at the Talks on the independence constitution and the interim arrangements. This also explains the "sheepish" acquiescence of Muzorewa's delegation to anything that the British have so far proposed at the Talks.

12. Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates, despite this

uneven-handed handling of the negotiations, in the public, the British delegation has, throughout the talks, presented itself as a mediator between the Patriotic Front and the Salisbury delegation. But because of the secrecy of the bilateral talks, the British were able to hide from the Patriotic Front what was said between themselves and the Salisbury delegation. Even if nothing conspiratorial might have transpired in the bilateral talks between the British and the Salisbury delegation, the mere fact that the British did not find it necessary to report to the plenary sessions substantive exchanges that occurred in the bilateral talks, engendered a feeling of distrust and suspicion on our part. This was certainly not helpful in creating an atmosphere of reconciliation that Lord Carrington so much spoke about at the beginning of the Lancaster House Conference.

The Patriotic Front's spirit of Compromise:

13. Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates, we do not want to create the impression that nothing has been achieved in the current talks in London. On the contrary, despite our dissatisfaction with the Chairman's attitude towards us, the Patriotic Front delegation has participated in the Lancaster House Conference in a spirit of compromise and objectivity. Hence despite our serious reservations on certain important aspects of the independence constitution as proposed by the British delegation, we finally reached an agreement after the British accommodated certain recommendations from the Patriotic Front's own proposed independence constitutional framework. We had disagreed with the British on the nature of the Presidency, special minority representation, qualifications for citizenship, The



Bill of Rights (particularly with respect to the clause on protection against deprivation of property), etc. But in making this concession, the Patriotic Front made it clear "that if we are satisfied beyond doubt about the vital issues of the transitional arrangements, there will not be need to revert to discussion on the constitution including those issues on which we reserved our position."

14. Mr Chairman, distinguished delegates, the independence constitution that we have accepted with reservations is not the kind of a document that the Patriotic Front would have liked to have under normal conditions. We accepted it despite the obvious risks and complications built into that constitution to protect minority interests in our country. In agreeing to compromise over the vital issues that impinge upon the future well being of our people, the Patriotic Front was seeking to create a healthy atmosphere of reconciliation. Having done that, we are amazed that certain forces continue to see us as intransigent and uncompromising. Mr. Chairman, The Patriotic Front being itself directly involved in the war against the fascist Salisbury regime knows the cost of this war in human lives. We have seen our people's homes burnt down, unarmed civilians butchered, and women and children napalmed by Rhodesian forces. The civilian populations of the Frontline States of Botswana, Mozambique, and Zambia have also been subjected to these barbarous acts of atrocity. Hence the Patriotic Front is not unmindful of the suffering of our people. But this does not mean that we can accept any settlement formula at any cost. Having suffered first from repression and exploitation for nearly a century now, and secondly from barbarous acts of atrocity daily perpetrated by the Rhodesian

forces, our people are now resolutely determined to rid themselves of the cancer of racism once and for all. They will, therefore, not accept anything that does not decisively and irreversibly transfer power from the racist minority regime to the majority of our people as a whole (black, white or yellow). Whether or not the independence constitution which we have accepted with reservations will decisively and irreversibly transfer power to our people depends upon the nature of the transitional arrangements.

Transitional arrangements:

15. Mr Chairman, distinguished delegates, the Patriotic Front delegation to the Lancaster House Talks has argued that the length of the transition period should be determined on the basis of the tasks that should be accomplished by the Transitional Administration before the independence constitution is implemented. In our view the tasks of the Transitional Administration are:

- (a) conducting the day-to-day administration of the country;
- (b) ensuring the cessation of hostilities;
- (c) establishing conditions of peace and security;
- (d) holding free and fair elections;
- (e) creating conditions in which the process towards genuine majority rule and independence are irreversible;
- (f) administering the return of refugees and the resettlement of all displaced people.

Mr Chairman, distinguished delegates, we have estimated that at least six months will be required to accomplish these tasks. For their part, the British say that all these things can be accomplished in two months. In a document which I now make available to the

4th committee of the General Assembly, entitled: " Essential Requirements for the Transition" the Patriotic Front shows how long it will take to effect a ceasefire (2 months), to return and resettle displaced people and to delimit constituencies and register voters (3 months) and finally to campaign for elections (1 month). Mr Chairman, I hope you will find it possible to circulate this Patriotic Front Document to members of the 4th committee.

16. Mr Chairman, distinguished delegates, given the history of war in our country, we believe that peace and security are a most basic pre-requisite requirement for free and fair elections. The condition of peace and security can only be guaranteed by security forces in which everyone has confidence. To that end , the Patriotic Front has proposed that the security forces during the Transitional period must be composed of a combination of the Patriotic Front's and the regime's forces, operating alongside a United Nations Peace Keeping Force. On their part , the British propose that the existing Rhodesian security forces under the Command of a British Governor will be the the only forces responsible for law and order during the Transitional period. The British security formula is based upon the assumption that Rhodesian security forces are non-political, and , therefore, capable of exercising a measure of neutrality which would inspire confidence from all sections of Zimbabwean society. Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates, the fact remains that these are the same forces which alongside the present police force , the public service and the judiciary, have supported the rebellion since 1965 when Ian Smith unilaterally declared the country independent. It is wrong to believe that these institutions of real power as presently constituted in rebel Rhodesia will abide by the law and act more non politically than they have done since 1965.

16(a). The British proposals for the interim seek to legitimize the regime's forces by placing them under the authority of the Governor during the interim period. This, if implemented, would mean that Patriotic Front forces would then be expected to surrender to these forces of the regime, which will have been legitimized through the process of placing them under the authority of the Governor. Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates, this partiality to the forces of the illegal regime on the part of Britain further undermines Britain's claim that she can be neutral in the implementation of the independence constitution.

17. Mr Chairman, distinguished delegates, the alliance between apartheid South Africa and Rhodesian regime means that the exclusive use of the existing Rhodesian security forces in the Transitional period will be clearly favourable to South Africa's strategy of creating a constellation of dependencies-" Bantustans" - in South Africa. This would threaten the peace and security not only of Southern Africa , but indeed the whole of Africa. The two month duration of the Transitional period and the security arrangements as proposed by the British at the Lancaster House Talks is a recipe for chaos, and as such a prescription for South African military intervention in our country. Mr Chairman, distinguished delegates we have analysed the British proposals for the Transitional period in detail. We now submit to you this analysis for the benefit of this committee. The document is entitled: "Patriotic Front Analysis of British Proposals for Interim Period." Although our analysis was done on the basis of the 13-point British Interim Proposals, not the 41-point detailed proposals, nothing has actually changed to off-set our analysis of the first, or even the more detailed description of the interim arrangements. What we said about the 13-point document still applies to the 41-point version.

18. Mr Chairman, distinguished delegated, we call upon all peace loving people to firmly support efforts aimed at achieving a lasting peace and a just settlement in Zimbabwe with the participation of all interested parties. The international community should take note of the international character of the Southern Rhodesia conflict and, therefore, through the United Nations reaffirm its readiness to take

concrete measures to ensure the irreversible decolonization of Southern Rhodesia. Mr. Chairman, the situation in our country is not an ordinary case of decolonization. There is war which has torn our country apart. As a result of the conflict, there are presently two armies locked in battle against each other. Any settlement which exclusively recognizes one of these armies cannot solve the problem. Nor can a ceasefire effected without international supervision hold. The Patriotic Front calls upon the United Nations to examine carefully the security arrangements that Britain is presently proposing for the transitional period in Zimbabwe.

20. Mr Chairman, some members of the international community might want to say that Southern Rhodesia is a direct responsibility of the United Kingdom and as such, falls out of the United Nations sphere of responsibility. Although this is theoretically speaking correct, in fact, the United Nations has been involved in the affairs of Southern Rhodesia since the early 1960's. First, the United Nations became involved in the affairs of our country when the liberation movement first came to this august body as petitioners. Secondly, the United Kingdom herself involved the United Nations in the Rhodesian problem when she asked this body to impose sanctions on the rebel colony after the rebellion of 1965. Besides, the problems of Southern Rhodesia are such as interest the United Nations because these problems have the potential of exploding into an international crisis. As recently as 1977, the United Kingdom asked the United Nations Security Council to endorse a plan to introduce United Nations peace keeping forces to supervise a ceasefire under the Anglo-American plan for Zimbabwe. At that time the British

Government convincingly argued for the need of the United Nations to be involved in the peace keeping role in Zimbabwe. By bringing the case to the United Nations, the United Kingdom was in fact saying that the Rhodesian problem was no longer the problem of the United Kingdom alone. In fact the United Nations has passed so many resolutions on Southern Rhodesia that one can no longer possibly think of any act of decolonization without some form of the United Nations presence. Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates, the Patriotic Front has proposed a United Nations role during the transitional period, because it is the only body with the experience and facilities to supervise elections and provide peace keeping forces. Moreover, the United Nations includes all countries, and as such offers the best hope for international peace and security.

21. Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates, we have not come to the United Nations to embarrass the United Kingdom. Nor do we believe that any acrimonious debate in these chambers will accomplish anything. What the Patriotic Front is interested in is a constructive evaluation of the situation in our country in light of the Lancaster House Talks and a United Nations expression of interest in a solution that brings about a lasting peace to our country. We call upon members of the United Nations to do whatever they can to assist the United Kingdom to devise a transition that will effectively implement the independence constitution without any further bloodshed in our country. We have already said that the proposed British plan for the interim is defective and dangerous. We hope that this committee will follow up the developments in London and take up appropriate action so that the people of Zimbabwe can not only regain their independence, but can also defend it.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.