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Review

Zimbabwe-EU Relations after the New Political Dispensation: Prospects for Re-engagement

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Relations between Zimbabwe and the European Union (EU) turned sour around 2002 after Zimbabwe embarked on the Fast-Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP). Zimbabwe received widespread condemnation from the EU which then imposed sanctions on the country. The sanctions resulted in the deterioration of socio-economic conditions as the country was denied access to lines of credit. Zimbabwe lost over US$42 billion in revenue and the economy contracted by over 40 percent by 2013. The exit of Britain from the EU and the current political dispensation in Zimbabwe provides prospects for re-engagement. The new political dispensation under President Emmerson Mnangagwa is currently reviving the economy and has implemented a number of economic reforms.

Key words: Re-engagement, sanctions, economy, new dispensation, diplomacy

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INTRODUCTION

The study of EU-Zimbabwe relations is very important in understanding international politics and foreign policy from both a global and local perspective. EU-Zimbabwe relations are very important given the fact that there has been contestations and conflict between the EU as a bloc and the Zimbabwean government over the imposition of sanctions. The word ‘sanctions’ has become a buzzword in the vocabulary of many ordinary Zimbabweans.The sanctions on Zimbabwe were introduced in response to political violence, human rights abuses and rule of law violations, as well as deteriorating democratic standards that followed the violent election processes in 2000 and 2002 (Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, 2012). Sanctions were intended to respond to human rights abuses and misrule and to press the Zimbabwean government for reforms (Research and Advocacy Unit, 2015). Some countries in the EU, donor agencies and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have argued that the removal of sanctions is not yet appropriate as the country has not made any meaningful reforms.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to examine EU-Zimbabwe relations in the wake of a new political dispensation in Zimbabwe.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is informed by the utilitarian ethical theory by Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. Utilitarianism is a term derived from ‘utility’ which generally refers to something. It is a normative ethical theory that argues that any action has moral worth if it brings about the greatest net happiness among available alternative courses of action to the greatest number of people affected by the given action. Mill popularised utilitarianism through the Greatest Happiness Principle, which states that “actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness” (Mill, 1993: 51). Human actions ought to be disposed towards promotion of the total balance of good over wrong for all the people affected by a given action. Utilitarianism is opposed to deontological ethical theory in that while the ethics of deontology conceive of morality as a duty or a moral rule that has to be followed, utilitarianism is a result-oriented ethical theory in that results of a given action are the sole basis for judging the morality of given action (Velasquez, 1997). Therefore an action is considered ‘right’ if it tends to produce happiness and ‘wrong’ if it brings about unhappiness to the greatest number of those people affected by a given action. In line with the utilitarian theory, Masaka (2012) argues that there is credibility in the argument that the targeted sanctions on Zimbabwe are targeted at the whole country and not individuals. The economy has suffered as a result of the imposition of sanctions imposed on key individuals who control the levers of the economy and politics. Targeted sanctions can therefore be evaluated on utilitarian grounds as immoral because they brought about net unhappiness to the whole country (Masaka, 2012).However, the economic meltdown in Zimbabwe cannot be blamed solely on targeted economic sanctions because poor economic and political decisions by the former President of Zimbabwe Robert Gabriel Mugabe and his ZANU-PF led government also largely contributed to the country’s unprecedented economic meltdown.

THE CONCEPT OF SANCTIONS

According to Chingono, Hove and Danda (2013) sanctions are a foreign policy tool used by States or international organizations to persuade a particular government or group of governments to change their policy by restricting trade, investment or other commercial activities. Sanctions are a penalty imposed to ensure international law whose major aim is to punish the law breaker so as to avoid him from attaining his objectives and to change the rule breaker’s policy (Hove, 2012). Therefore sanctions are a form of punishment to a target State in an effort to compel it to change certain unacceptable behaviour. The above arguments contradict EU’s view of sanctions. The EU in 2008 indicated that sanctions were ‘an instrument of a diplomatic or economic nature which seek to bring about a change in activities or policies such as violations of international law or human rights, or policies that do not respect the rule of law or democratic principles’. Sanctions are meant to bring about ‘change of behaviour’ and are not supposed to be ‘punishment or retribution’ (Chipanga and Mude, 2015).

Sanctions can be unilateral and multilateral in nature. Unilateral sanctions are imposed by a single state which resorts to sanctions as a tool of foreign policy with an objective to transform the targeted country’s behaviour. Multilateral sanctions are imposed by a group ofstates such as the United Nations (UN). It is widely accepted that sanctions take the form of travel restrictions, foreign aid reductions and cut-offs, trade bans, asset freezes, tariff increases, revocation of most favoured nation, trade status, negative votes in international financial institutions, removal of diplomatic relations. Sanctions can be economic or targeted. While sanctions have a myriad of objectives depending on which actor is sending them, unilaterally or multilaterally, one lucid objective among these is sanctions’ bid to isolate the respective state practising objectionable policies (Chingono, Hove and Danda, 2013). The objectives of sanctions include deterring a target from engaging in wrongful behaviour, compelling an offending state to abandon or cease behaviour that the sanctioner considers wrongful, alter the target state’s behaviour by subverting the incumbent wrong-doers, play a punitive role or to express a policy position symbolically to one’s own public or to other states in the international system (Eriksson, 2007). Targeted sanctions often termed ‘smart sanctions’ are usually targeted at a small circle within the ruling elite of a given country and are developed as an alternative to comprehensive sanctions that are proven to have a more devastating impact on the broader population than on those whose behaviour the sanctions had intended to influence. Targeted measures are a relatively new form of sanction, intended to constrain and change certain behaviour and promote international norms and standards, as well as meet domestic policy needs (Crisis Group Africa Briefing, 2012).

Chipanga and Mude (2015) argues that the rationale behind the targeted measures is to pressure key decision-makers considered to bear direct or indirect responsibility for a political or economic crisis in a particular regime with the objective of persuading or compelling them tochange their behaviour. Economic sanctions pressurise the intended state into compliance through intentional incapacitation of the economy. Comprehensive sanctions are full restrictive measures, including trade and financial sanctions. Sanctions have been constantly used due to their low costs as compared to war (Eriksson, 2007). This also grew from former President of the United States of America Woodrow Wilson’s recommendation that: “A nation that is boycotted is a nation that is in sight of surrender. Apply this economic, peaceful, silent, deadly remedy and there will be no need for force. It is a terrible remedy. It does not cost a life outside the nation boycotted, but it brings pressure upon that nation which, in my judgement, no modern nation could resist” (Chogugudza, 2009).

Targeted sanctions differ from comprehensive sanctions. Targeted sanctions involve the selective use of sanction measures with the intention to minimise unintended negative humanitarian impact by specifically targeting single persons, institutions and business organizations that are specified as contributing to certain kinds of behaviour that are disliked by the senders of sanctions, leaving out innocent people (Grebe, 2010). The concept of targeted measures – as opposed to comprehensive economic embargoes – has emerged since the early 1990s. It includes a range of personal sanctions (visa bans, asset freezes), selective sanctions (arms embargoes) and diplomatic sanctions (withdrawal of diplomatic status) (Portela, 2001).

Comprehensive sanctions are defined as ‘the application of the full arsenal of sanction measures, including trade and financial sanctions plus the senders of targeted sanctions intentional withdrawal, or threat of withdrawal, of customary trade or financial relations to force the offending state to toe the line as prescribed by the senders of the comprehensive sanctions (Grebe, 2010: 4). Targeted sanctions are thought to be useful in specifically identifying the culprits for punishment without necessarily dragging the innocent citizenry into bearing the unpleasant consequences of the sanctions regime. Therefore for targeted sanctions to be more effective, they ought not to bundle offenders and non-offenders together but should clinically identify the culprits for punishment while at the same time making sure that innocent people are not made to pay a heavy price for the crimes and misdeeds of selected individuals, institutions, and business organizations in a given state (Masaka, 2012). However, the unfortunate feature of targeted sanctions is that they may cause the deterioration of a situation they were designed to alleviate and are therefore, largely an ineffective tool to effect policy changes with regard to their target (Minter & Schmit, 1988).

EFFECTS OF SANCTIONS ON ZIMBABWE

The imposition of targeted sanctions on Zimbabwe brought with it bad publicity, a record low credit rating, and a pariah state tag (Masaka, 2012). Investors willingly pulled out of the country, avoided making new investments, or were commandeered by their countries not to make new or further investments in Zimbabwe. Targeted sanctions led to sustained disinvestment and de-industrialization in Zimbabwe that severely weakened the economy with negative consequences for the citizens' welfare and well-being (Herald, 7 July 2011). This was meant to make the targeted sanctions more effective in weakening the economy and thus exert significant pressure on the Zimbabwe government to change its behaviour. This led to the collapse of the economy. In 2007 the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) indicated that “Far from the claim that sanctions in Zimbabwe are ring-fenced and targeted at a few individuals, the reality on the ground is that the tight grip of the declared and undeclared sanctions is being felt throughout the entire economy” (RBZ, 2007: 2). With an unhealthy Balance of Payments (BOP) that predated the imposition of targeted sanctions, the global supremacy of the USA and EU forced Multilateral Financial Institutions (MFIs) such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) to stop advancing bridging finance to the Government of Zimabwe to revitalise its BOP and the economy (RBZ, 2007). Dorussen and Mo (2001) argues that sanctions are more likely to be effective if the target state suffers large costs and if these costs are predictable.

In reality, the clinical application of targeted sanctions against a select few people, institutions, and business organizations within a state, such as Zimbabwe, and avoiding harm to the rest has proved to be a grossly superficial strategy because there is an intricate interconnectedness between the political leadership and the people, institutions, and business organizations. Targeting the political elite and their business interests may, in fact, prove suicidal because the targeted individuals may hold the economic levers of the country. Weakening these individuals would effectively mean the weakening of a significant chunk of the national economy. Political leaders preside over the affairs of the country in their various aspects, including the economy. Restricting them in any way brings about negative effects that have national implications. The effects of targeted sanctions on Zimbabwe led to economic collapse (Masaka, 2012).

EU-ZIMBABWE RELATIONS

Since independence in 1980, the EU has been Zimbabwe's main source of development assistance (Williams, 2002). There has been a lot of contestation on the issue of EU-Zimbabwe relations from the time sanctions were imposed on Zimbabwe.Zimbabwe's problems with the EU began in February 2001 when the EU began a political dialogue with Zimbabwe in response to concerns about human rights, democracy, and media freedom in the country. In October 2001, in light of escalating human rights violations (and especially those that accompanied the elections in June 2000), and the continuing occupation of white-owned farms, the Cotonou Agreement Council (the CA Council) opened formal consultations with Zimbabwe.

From 29 October 2001, EU Foreign Affairs Ministers unanimously agreed to apply political pressure on Zimbabwe under Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement. The EU had previously invoked Article 96 in its relations with Haiti (which led to sanctions) and the Ivory Coast (which did not). Signed in June 2000, Article 96 regulates

EU relations with the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) states. It stipulates that if there is no progress on human rights issues within 75 days after formal consultations began ‘appropriate measures’ including sanctions, may be implemented. In line with its mechanisms, the EU sent a letter to Zimbabwe seeking political consultations. However, the EU was rebuffed almost immediately when the Zimbabwean government rejected its request to allow its officials to monitor the 2002 presidential elections (Williams, 2002).

The EU’s dilemma was that both its ministers and former President Mugabe knew that stopping its £7.35m of development aid would only harm the poorest members of Zimbabwean society (Dempsey, 2002). In addition, by January 2002, the EU admitted that even adopting ‘smart sanctions’ would have a limited effect without the co-operation of other regional states which was at that stage virtually non-existent. At an EU-Zimbabwe meeting in Brussels on 11 January 2002, Zimbabwe’s former Foreign Affairs Minister Stanley Mudenge accused Britain of ‘exercising hypnotic powers’ over its EU partners. Mudenge argued that the British government was using the EU to renege on its commitments to fund the land reform process in Zimbabwe. In response, the Spanish ambassador to the EU, Javier Conde de Saro, rubbished Mudenge’s suggestion stating that the EU member states were ‘not the UK’s puppets’ (Dempsey and Innocenti, 2002).

The Government of Zimbabwe argued that there was no violation of human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law in Zimbabwe. It indicated that the EU was using such allegations as a means to punish the Government for land redistribution. This was inherently implausible given the volume of evidence that human rights, democratic principles, and the rule of law were being extensively violated, and that a very important marker of these fundamental features, the elections in 2000, had led to near-universal opprobrium.

The Cotonou Agreement

On 19 February 2002, the EU made its final decision to impose sanctions on Zimbabwe. It indicated that it had taken the following measures in line with Article 96(2)(c) of the Cotonou Agreement:

(i) Suspension of the budgetary support under Zimbabwe's 7th and 8th EDF National Indicative Programmes (NIP's);
(ii) Suspension of financial support for all projects, except those in direct support of the population;
(iii) Re-orientation of financial support to assist the population;
(iv) Suspension of the signature of the 9th EDF NIP;
(v) Suspension of Annex 2 of Article 12 of the Cotonou Agreement insofar as required for the application of restrictive measures adopted on the basis of the Treaty establishing the EC; and
(vi) Evaluation of regional projects on a case-by-case basis.

In addition to the above measures, the EU further imposed the following sanctions:

(i) An embargo on the sale, supply or transfer of arms and of technical advice, assistance or training related to military activities, and the sale or supply of equipment which could be used for internal repression; and
(ii) A travel ban on persons who engage in serious violations of human rights and of the freedom of opinion, of association and of peaceful assembly in Zimbabwe, and a freezing of their funds, other financial assets or economic resources.

Despite the 18 February 2002 Council decision, and the freezing of the signature and implementation of the EDF programme, European Commission assistance to Zimbabwe since the beginning of the crisis has continued. As seen above, the Council’s decision resulted in the Commission suspending financial support for all projects, except those in direct support of the population. The key clauses of the Council’s decision stated that:

> *Financial support for all projects is suspended except those in direct support of the population, particularly those in the social sectors. Financing shall be re-oriented in direct support of the population, in particular in the social sectors, democratisation, respect for human rights and the rule of law.*

The treatment of projects therefore has depended upon the degree to which they provide direct support to the population and three groups of programs/projects were identified. The bulk of the EDF portfolio in 2002 was already aimed at providing direct support to the population. Projects unaffected by the Council’s decision included small-scale irrigation programmes, support to the University of Zimbabwe Veterinary Faculty, health sector support, among others (Research and Advocacy Unit, 2015). Other projects, designed in the late 1990s, which combined direct support to the population with support for capacity-building and policy reform in Government ministries, were terminated, and, in these cases, the approach was to suspend the capacity-building and policy reform activities and to re-allocate their budgetary allocations to direct support for the population. Some health, educational and agricultural research projects fell under this group. Another group of projects which did not provide direct support to the population were also suspended with the funds earmarked or reallocated to direct support for the population. Therefore apart from the direct 'humanitarian' assistance already being provided to Zimbabwe when the dispute was formalised, other forms of support were not removed, but rather re-aligned to humanitarian or democracy support. Simply put, the overall amount of money that the EU was providing to Zimbabwe did not change at all.

The EU and its Member States have provided more than €1.5 billion in development assistance since 2002. The European Commission has provided €90-100 million per year in development assistance to the people of Zimbabwe in the areas of food security and agriculture, social sectors and the promotion of good governance. Furthermore, the EU is Zimbabwe's second largest trading partner (after South Africa). EU-Zimbabwe trade balance is positive for Zimbabwe. For example in 2012, total trade between the EU Member States and Zimbabwe (exports and imports) amounted to €609 million (around $791 million) with a positive trade balance of €132 million (about $ 171.5 million) in favour of Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe's exports to the EU amounted to €370.85 million (about $482 million) and imports from the EU had a total value of €237.97 million (around $ 309.37 million). Zimbabwe–EU trade in fact doubled during the course of the Government of National Unity (GNU). So it is very hard to claim that the EU is punishing Zimbabwe, and, in fact, is providing assistance when the pending dispute under Article 96 does not require this (Daily News, 9 June 2013).

A review of the literature reveals that there is only limited agreement among researchers on the Zimbabwe-EU sanctions debate. According to Chingono (2010:212) citing Nossal (1999) she argues that "sanctions only amount to a 'rain dance'-in other words, an activity that actually accomplishes very little, but that makes the participants feel good because something is being done about a serious problem". The issue of sanctions in international relations generates much academic contestation even among the effects based perspective scholarly camp.

Although relations have long been strained, the EU resumed direct development cooperation with Harare in November 2014. Since then, with member states, it has engaged in limited senior-level political dialogue. The EU set out a framework for engagement in the National Indicative Program for Zimbabwe 2014-2020, focusing on three sectors: health, agriculture-based economic development, and governance and institution-building. While this framework remains relevant, the ouster of former President Robert Gabriel Mugabe from power provides the EU an opportunity to adjust its approach and offer Zimbabwe the promise of a deeper relationship should certain conditions be met (a promise which is explicit in the 22 January 2018 Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions on Zimbabwe). This would require determining levels of support based on realistic deliverables and deadlines, based partly on timelines set by President Mnangagwa during his presentation to the ZANU-PF's extraordinary Congress, his State of the Nation address and the government's commitments to deliverables within the first 100 days in office.

Zimbabwe's Finance Minister Patrick Chinamasa said that President Emmerson Mnangagwa's led government was pursuing both economic and political re-engagements with international partners to normalise relations with key global economic giants. Officiating at a breakfast meeting organised by Centre for Risk Analytics and Insurance Research, Minister Chinamasa said the re-engagement process was top on the agenda in the new dispensation, to wean off the country from being a pariah State. He stated that:

> "We are going to re-engage in a very serious manner with international partners; not just economic engagement, but also normalising political relations with those countries. We are trying to normalise relations with the European Union, the United States of America and the United Kingdom. We consider normalising relations with United Kingdom as key because our problems are bilateral. At least there is willingness on both sides to put on the table the issues that divided us over the past years."

Minister Chinamasa further said government was intensifying the Lima process with a view to clear the country's debt and unlock fresh funding. The Lima plan was agreed in 2015 with Zimbabwe promising to clear its $1,8 billion debt to the IMF, the World Bank and the African Development Bank. To date, Zimbabwe has cleared the IMF arrears. He said the country would also re-engage the European Investment Bank and bilateral creditors. To assist the political re-engagement, Minister Chinamasa said there was commitment to protect land which falls under Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (BIPPA), adding that government was expediting paying compensation to the affected farmers (The Zimbabwean, 2018).

The EU has made it clear that it is open for re-engagement with the new political administration. The European Council stated that:

> "The EU reaffirms its availability to engage constructively with the new authorities including through a structured political dialogue, with political actors across the spectrum, and with civil society, on the basis of a mutual commitment to shared values focused on human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law. It will do so in coordination with African and International partners."

It further stated that;

> "The EU welcomes the intention of the Zimbabwean authorities to deliver economic reforms in Zimbabwe, aiming at job creation, growth and sustainable long-term development, and reaffirms its willingness to support the planning and implementation of much needed structural changes and the promotion of good governance."

The EU has made commitments to support Zimbabwe in areas such as strengthening economic and political institutions, public sector finance management and macro-economic policies, developing value chains in support of private sector development such as access to finance and quality infrastructure.

AREAS IN NEED OF REFORM IN ZIMBABWE

In his inaugural speech on 24 November 2017, President Mnangagwa confirmed that elections will take place by August 2018 as scheduled. However, he did not address critical issues, notably the security sector, media, and electoral reforms necessary to ensure credible, free, and fair elections.

Specifically, the EU could link its support to reforms in Zimbabwe in four key areas:

(i) Security Sector- On November 24, 2017 High Court Judge George Chiweshe ruled that the military intervention that led to the ouster of former President Mugabe was lawful under Zimbabwe's constitution. Whatever the merits of the ruling, the judgment could embolden the military to carry out further incursions in Zimbabwe's political or electoral affairs in the future. The highly partisan stance of Zimbabwe's military leadership, particularly without meaningful security sector reforms, significantly reduces the chances that free, fair and credible elections can be held.
The military has a long history of partisanship with the ruling party, ZANU-PF, interfering in the nation's political and electoral affairs in ways that adversely affected the ability of citizens to vote freely. The partisanship of the security forces' leadership has translated into abuses by these forces against civil society activists, journalists, and members and supporters of the opposition political party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) (Mavhinga, 2017).

Security sector reforms should also include initiatives to professionalise the police forces and provide for civilian supervision, improve parliamentary oversight of the defence sector and repeal legislation inconsistent with the 2013 constitution such as the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) (which curtails rights such as freedom of assembly) and the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) (which allows the state to severely control the work of the media and limit free speech).These laws were used under former President Mugabe to severely curtail basic rights through vague defamation clauses and draconian penalties. Partisan policing and prosecution has worsened the impact of the repressive provisions in the AIPPA and POSA laws. Failure to repeal or significantly revise these laws and to develop mechanisms to address the partisan conduct of the police leaves little chance of the full enjoyment of rights to freedom of association and peaceful assembly prior to and during the coming elections.

(ii) Elections- There is need to guarantee greater independence for the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) and credible voters roll for Zimbabweans at home and abroad. The EU also should follow up on the president's recent offer to allow EU and other Observers to monitor the 2018 harmonised elections. There has been no indication that the Mnangagwa administration intends to ensure the independence and enhance the professionalism of ZEC. There is an urgent need ahead of the elections, for Zimbabwe's Constitutional Court to review Judge Chiweshe's ruling, and ensure that members of the security forces observe strict political neutrality. Failure to ensure a professional, independent and non-partisan role for the security forces may make it difficult to deliver the elections needed to put Zimbabwe on a democratic and rights-respecting track (Mavhinga, 2017).

(iii) Economic sector-There should be a broad dialogue on the government's economic reform strategy to be led by an independent committee, including representatives from the opposition, CSOs, the churches and important commercial sectors. Investors should be guaranteed security of their investments.

(iv) Strengthening independent commissions- There is need to bolster the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC) and extending its mandate for it to be a truly independent body able to deal with past government abuses in terms of the Zimbabwean Constitution and the NPRC Act. The EU should step up support for institutions such as the Auditor General (AG), Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission (ZACC) and Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC) while continuing to engage CSOs, and support their efforts to track government reforms, particularly those related to security, governance, fiscal accountability and anti-corruption.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE NEW POLITICAL DISPENSATION DURING THE FIRST 100 DAYS

1. Scaling down the indigenisation law to make it only applicable to investments in diamonds and platinum mining.

2. Calling for the holding of free, fair and credible harmonised elections.
3. Extending invitation to the EU and other countries and international organisations to observe the 2018 harmonised elections. A nine member EU election exploratory team arrived on 19 March 2018 for pre-election assessment ahead of the July 2018 harmonised elections.
4. Zero tolerance to corruption backed by action. A number of high ranking officials have been brought before the courts of law to answer charges of corruption.
5. Three months amnesty to those who had externalised foreign currency- $591,1 million was repatriated during the first 100 days while $826,5 million was still outstanding. Names of individuals and companies who did not return their loot were named in the press.
6. Declaration of assets by all cabinet ministers.
7. Re-engaging the international community and promoting investment. The country managed to secure US$3 billion worth of investment commitments.
8. Scraping of treatment fees to all vulnerable groups –children under the age of 5, pregnant women and senior citizens above 65 years.
9. Reducing the price of fuel from around $1.42 to $1.38 per litre of petrol.
10. Removing levies on all bank transactions below US$10.
11. Facilitating greater use of electronic payments to address the cash shortages.

CONCLUSION

When targeted sanctions are directed against political leaders and Government officials of a particular country, it is usually the vulnerable groups of society who suffer and not the targeted group. Former United Nations, Secretary General, Kofi Annan once bemoaned the adverse effects of sanctions, when he said that:

> ‘Sanctions remain a blunt instrument, which hurt large numbers of people who are not their primary targets’.
> Sanctions, whether disguised in any form, ultimately resulted in the deterioration of health services, shortages of drugs, and high infant mortality rates. Innocent civilians were therefore, adversely affected by the sanctions. Sanctions have also had adverse and downstream social and economic effects on the Zimbabwean economy’s key sectors. The debilitating effects of sanctions have seen the country experiencing foreign currency shortages. This has seen the country failing to import fuel, hospital drugs, and critical machinery for industry and failing to service its external debt.

The European Union (EU) has shown its willingness to reengage and assist Zimbabwe under the leadership of President Emmerson Mnangagwa. Zimbabwe has been under EU sanctions for close to two decades as punishment for the country's decision to redistribute land to the landless majority which started in 2000. The new political dispensation led by President Emmerson Mnangagwa has since coming into office last November, embarked on a re-engagement programme that has seen Zimbabwe's relations with the EU and the international community at large improving. The EU team leader on Agriculture, Private Sector and Trade, Mr Thomas Opperer, indicated that Zimbabwe was going to benefit immensely from the re-engagement process. The EU team stated that the re-engagement drive would ensure that Zimbabwe would benefit alongside with other African countries from an ambitious external investment plan of the EU. The investment plan is based on the realisation that the traditional development assistance alone cannot address the challenges and opportunities for sustaining economic growth. He further noted that the engine for economic growth was investments in the private sector and thus the EU was adopting a paradigm shift with a view to promote economic growth among African countries through its external investment plan. President Mnangagwa indicated that Zimbabwe was open for business and efforts are therefore underway to attract foreign direct investment from across the globe in sectors such as mining, tourism, agriculture and manufacturing. This has seen Zimbabwe approving investment proposals worth more than $7 billion between December 2017 and April 2018.

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