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SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA AND GLOBAL HEALTH
Donald M. Payne (D-NJ), Chairman

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Testimony By

Steven F. McDonald
Consulting Director
Africa Program
Project on Leadership and Building State Capacity
The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars
Washington, DC

Mr. Chairman:

Subcommittee Members:

Distinguished Guests:

It gives me great pleasure to have the opportunity to appear before this august Subcommittee and before its distinguished Chairman, the Honorable Donald Payne. I have had the honor of working with Chairman Payne for the last twenty years or so on issues of importance to Africa and to U.S./African relations. From the seminal role he played in bringing to a close the Apartheid era in South Africa in the 1980s and early 1990s, to his opposition to President Mobutu in the then-Zaire, to his support for the emerging democracies around the continent in the last decade, Chairman Payne has exhibited a unique and sustained commitment to Africa. It has been refreshing and constructive for those of us in the NGO and policy communities to have a Chair who has accumulated the experience and knowledge that is the hallmark of Chairman Payne, but, more importantly, who truly cares for Africa and its peoples.

I have been lucky enough to have been called upon to contribute from time-to-time some hopefully helpful guidance and insights from my 40 years of living and working in Africa as he and this Subcommittee have looked at ways to respond positively to the unfolding dramas around this magnificent continent. I welcome that opportunity again.

Today, as we look together at the situation in Zimbabwe and think about how we might play a constructive role in encouraging the transition to democracy, peace and stability in that troubled country, I must begin with a caveat about my level of knowledge. Although I was intimately involved in the early negotiations that led to an independent Zimbabwe as a U.S.

But, all was not as it seemed. I need not reiterate here the brutal campaigns against opposition that characterized the political landscape in Zimbabwe

countries. This violence against opposition party supporters and candidates again characterized the 2008 elections, which were won by the MDC.

Through all of this, the international community, the United States in particular, has had limited options on how to respond. In fact, the situation has presented a real dilemma to policy makers. Part of that dilemma was created by the early support and excitement around Mugabe's ascension to the Presidency and the promise that his government held, as it offered free secondary education for all children, at first allowed opposition parties to contest elections and hold seats in government, worked with land owners and farmers to encourage production, supported a free market economy, manufacturing and mining, and moved Zimbabwe into a leading economic role in the region, and a seeming bastion of stability.

Subsequent behavior by Mugabe and his regimes, as they consolidated and perpetrated their hold on power, including eliminating opposition members, shackling a free press, and corrupting the democratic system, began to paint a different picture of who this man was, and what his true motivations were and are. Outside observers have been dismayed at the seeming transformation that occurred.

But, this early optimism from the international community makes the recent history of Zimbabwe, which is fraught with human rights violations, abrogation of democratic norms, corruption and mismanagement of an unimaginable proportion, all the more frustrating to policy makers the world over who watched Zimbabwe's birth and first years of existence with pride and hope. Recent years, as stated above and as will be developed by my fellow witnesses today, have dimmed the aura that once surrounded Mugabe and independent Zimbabwe.

The response of the international community has been the application of a number of sanctions against government officials, a redirecting of development aid through non-government channels, statements of strong condemnation for human rights abuses, encouragement of regional (SADC and Africa Union) peace initiatives, support for the GPA, a new constitution and free and fair elections, and a strong cooling of bilateral relations. At the same time, however, the international community has been and continues to be incredibly generous to Zimbabwe, particularly as it focuses on emergency food and relief supplies. Drawing from some statistics I received from

three years has hovered at about \$800 million a year – 20 per cent of GDP in 2008 when donors provided food aid for over half the population and 10 per cent of GDP in the current year. Total foreign aid to Zimbabwe since 2000 (all of it in the form of grant aid) has in fact exceeded the total combined foreign aid received by Zimbabwe from independence in 1980 to the year 2000. In 2010, foreign aid has again exceeded \$800 million – half of it being disbursed on humanitarian assistance in on

their tolerance of the Mugabe regime, legislation has been offered in both the House and Senate that would seek to continue to apply pressure to the wayward regime and the individuals who have not committed to the GPA, while at the same time not exacerbating the damage to the fabric of the economy and the welfare of the people of Zimbabwe, and, LOOKING TO THE FUTURE, fashioning a way to support a viable opposition and encourage a return to functioning democracy. The potential and hope for a nation naturally endowed with an industrious people, huge natural resources, and agricultural wealth, has created a dichotomy for policy makers as they try to encourage change but not further harm the people of Zimbabwe.

The intent of legislation offered by U.S. policymakers, and by other Western governments, as I read it, is to fully condemn the atrocities and depravations of the recent past, but to look for some thread of hope - some way to get around this government that turned so dramatically away from its people to focus only on perpetrating its own power and privilege – to find a way to help this long-suffering people in their recovery and transition back to democracy.

I would caution policy makers as they look at possible policy options to be certain that the “sticks” don’t get lost among the “carrots,” that the monitoring of performance on democracy and recovery be strict and comprehensive, and they do not allow the current government to use any lifting of sanctions, however targeted and whatever caveats are applied, as a propaganda victory. The ZANU-PF government has become adept at blaming the “illegal sanctions against Zimbabwe,” as they call them, with holding back its economic recovery and inhibiting its industrial and agricultural sectors. It blames opposition party members for fomenting any violence or abuses against the population. In fact, it has been the clear policies and actions of ZANU-PF that have resulted in this situation, but they continue to live in denial, blaming everyone else, domestic and international, for the state of affairs in which Zimbabwe finds itself.

I know my colleagues will offer some concrete suggestions in their testimony on how U.S. policy and engagement might be shaped in the coming years. Legislation offered by this body and your colleagues in the Senate offer a number of possible avenues for positively impacting the transition. The support for youth employment; strengthening rule of law and human rights compliance; crucial development assistance in health care, agriculture, education, clean water, and land reform; and reconciliation and

democracy promotion are all necessary and I am glad that my government is including these elements in the options they are considering.

However, let me add one further thought on one specific aspect of the renewal that is to come. Based on my own experience in other conflict and post-conflict countries in Africa, as well as conversations I have had with Zimbabweans currently engaged in pushing for recovery, I would like to underline an important and often overlooked element in dealing with conflicted societies. Any country emerging from conflict has several common imperatives. They are intuitive, but almost always ignored. Trust has been broken and the antagonists to the conflict do not have a sense of interdependence or shared interests. Relationships are torn asunder. Communications are characterized by posturing and accusations. The key stakeholders do not listen to each other and discourse is confrontational. Finally, there is no agreement on how power is to be shared and decisions made. In short, there is no common vision or sense of common identity.

There are tried and tested ways in whd

governance, development, reconciliation and recovery cannot go forward. I am pleased to see that bills now under consideration address this element by providing support for reconciliation efforts, strengthening local governments and encouraging peace building process. I hope this remains central to any role the U.S. decides to play.

Thank you.