

**Prepared Remarks by Ambassador Bruce Wharton**  
**Food For Thought**  
**American Corner Mutare**  
**January 16, 2013**

Good day everyone! It's really a pleasure to be here in Mutare today, after more than 10 years away from beautiful Manicaland. Driving here just now from Africa University, I was reminded of the unique geography of Mutare and the Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe. I am repeatedly amazed, for the second time in my life, by the diverse landscapes and scenes that I find here in your country, and I am very honored to have returned here, now as the U.S. Ambassador. Let me first thank the officials of the City of Mutare and the Turner Memorial Library staff for both your willingness and your hard work in making this American Corner in Mutare a special place. Without your support, we could not reach our goals, which are to provide innovative online resources, host programs and activities of interest to the community, and offer educational advising services for students interested in studying at U.S. universities.

In Zimbabwe we have these American Corners here in Mutare, as well as in Gweru and Bulawayo, in addition to our facilities in Harare. An American Corner is a place where you can come and interact with America; and where you can learn more about our culture, values, and history. Be it through books or online, you can use this Corner to satisfy whatever interests you have—personal, academic, or professional.

When you come here, you'll be greeted by Lucy Chiduku, as I was today. I'd like to thank her, and our partners from EducationUSA. The work you do in advising students as they pursue their educational dreams is phenomenal, and I am thrilled to see it happening here to Mutare. Thank you Lucy; we'll be seeing a lot of each other – and I hope you'll be seeing a lot of the faces here today in the AC more often from now on.

Finally, I'd like to recognize Sibusisiwe Mukwakwami, our Corner intern, who incidentally was the winner of the 2012 Black History Month Essay Contest and who is a part of the U.S. Student Achievers Program, or USAP. USAP is administered by the U.S. Embassy to assist low income but high achieving students, like Sibusisiwe, to find academic placements and scholarships to study in the U.S. We hope that Sibusisiwe will soon receive good news and become one of roughly 1,400 Zimbabwean students presently enrolled at various accredited colleges and universities in the U.S. I also look forward to watching that number grow as a result of this Corner. So already, by stepping into this location with me today, you better understand some of our goals in Zimbabwe with regard to improving access of information for the young people – and really all people – in Zimbabwe.

So, with that introduction, I would like to speak with you, citizens of Manicaland, a province full of riches, about your hopes for the future. I'd like to take this opportunity, on my first visit to Mutare as Ambassador, to meet you and to spend some time listening to you. I'd like to learn more about your interests, your concerns, and your hopes for your hometowns in 2013. I would like to know what has changed here since I last visited in 2003. I know Manicaland as rich in

minerals, mountains, agriculture, and education, with peaceful and hardworking people, but I'd love to know how you see yourselves and how we might build our relationship together moving forward.

Let me start, then, by telling you a little about me, and about my job as Ambassador.

I was raised in a home full of stories about, and respect for, the people of Africa – a legacy of my grandparents' 35 years as missionaries in what was then the Belgian Congo. My wife and I raised three children in Southern Africa during Foreign Service assignments in South Africa and Zimbabwe, making the reality of returning to lead a U.S. Mission a privilege that is full of personal as well as professional meaning.

Ultimately, you know that I am here representing President Obama and working to build bilateral relations with Zimbabwe. With full recognition of the complex challenges Zimbabwe faces, I remain optimistic about the country's future and believe that the United States has an important role to play in helping the people of Zimbabwe build a just, free and prosperous nation. The trajectory of Zimbabwe's last 15 years should not obscure the nation's tremendous potential.

In addition to my government's primary policy interests of supporting strong democratic institutions, sustainable economic growth, regional security, and expanding opportunities for people and communities, I am also personally interested in supporting women's empowerment, education, conservation, freedom of expression, and the rights of all people.

The United States has shown its deep and abiding concern for Zimbabwe through the nearly one billion dollars in humanitarian relief and health-related assistance we have provided just in the last six years. There is no more explicit expression of our support for the people of Zimbabwe than our standing by them through their times of greatest need.

The U.S. Embassy in Zimbabwe is active in supporting programs in health, agriculture, business, culture, and civil society sectors. We provide ongoing support to the Zimbabwean Parliament and constitution-making process; and we have invested heavily in the health and food security sectors. The U.S. also promotes business linkages, encouraging American investors to look closely at Zimbabwe's educated labor force and long-term growth potential.

Let me point out a few of the programs that we have specific to Manicaland.

In the health sector, for example, we are actively addressing HIV and AIDS. This year the U.S. government will provide over \$90 million toward national efforts to address this disease. Specifically, we support the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare by providing prevention of mother-to-child-transmission services at all health facilities, including the training of health workers. Tomorrow, I will visit Sakubva District Hospital to see the USAID Maternal and Child Health Integrated Program (MCHIP) in action. The Kangaroo Mother Care project focuses on low birth weight and premature babies who are at much higher risk of death or illness than heavier babies or babies born at term.

Also in the health field in Manicaland, the U.S. supports a number of Voluntary Testing and Counseling sites and post-test counseling services for people living with HIV/AIDS. These sites screen for TB, test CD4 counts, and provide family planning support. We are working with the Ministry to scale up male circumcision activities in Manicaland, to provide both male and female condoms through both public and private sector outlets, and to support the procurement and distribution of anti-retroviral drugs through the national system.

U.S. health experts are also addressing

- 1) Tuberculosis, by training health workers on TB screening and management;
- 2) Starting next month, we will begin providing outreach family planning services; and
- 3) we are fighting Malaria, by distributing insecticide treated bednets and supporting the Ministry to improve case management and treatment of malaria at a community level.

As you can see, we share many values and concerns - demonstrated through the prioritized programming on family health.

The U.S. embassy also supports economic growth programs. This is one of our Mission's top goals in Zimbabwe, including in Manicaland. For example, the USAID Zimbabwe Livestock Development Project is working in nine Milk Collection Centres (MCCs) in Manicaland. The project assists 547 households, of which 131 are female headed. USAID has distributed 221 dairy heifers through the nine Centres. Repayments are being used to purchase and distribute additional dairy heifers. In 2012, we supported the farmers to produce about 505,000 liters of milk, allowing household income from milk sales via these Centres to reach an average of \$1,872 per year. I visited this project yesterday and was very excited to see the enthusiasm on the part of the farmers, and to imagine the prospects for people who just needed a little help to improve their lives, and their communities, dramatically.

Manicaland is a focus area for USAID's agricultural development activities and over the past two years we have assisted 21,000 rural households in Manicaland to increase production of food and cash crops, and generate new income from sales of maize, sugar beans, bananas, paprika and other crops.

Last season, 1,400 farmers received technical assistance and input credit in Chipinge, helping them to produce more than a 1,000 tons of sugar beans, which they sold for \$1.13 million. That works out to be \$484 of new income per family.

In the last eighteen months, farmers in Honde Valley and irrigation schemes in southern Manicaland have adopted high-technology methods for banana production including tissue cultured plants and modern irrigation systems. They tripled their incomes from banana sales, showing that smallholders can become efficient commercial farmers. This effort has raised the quality and prices for their bananas and tripled sales from \$75,000 in 2011 to \$283,000 in 2012.

These successful commercial developments combined with a credit fund that has dispersed \$9.5 million into the smallholder sector, have attracted new sources of essential working capital for the agricultural sector. As a result, production and sales of high value cash crops, such as

paprika and potato grown by Manicaland farmers, are set to double and triple over the next few years to levels that will eliminate food insecurity and establish agriculture as the new source of wealth creation for rural families.

I am proud to highlight these activities and to congratulate my USAID colleagues and their partners on these successes.

But, we need to prepare to move beyond a relationship defined by aid. The people of Zimbabwe are fully capable of feeding themselves, meeting the nation's health and education needs, building a dynamic political system, and restoring what was once one of the strongest economies in Africa. For the past several years, Zimbabwe has gone through some tough times. And, as you can see, the American people have been here to help the Zimbabwean people get through them. That's what friends do. The United States is here to help our friends get back up on their feet so that Zimbabwe can again be a nation of economic opportunities, of respect for the rule of law and the rights of all people. Those are values that reflect the core of what Americans share with Zimbabweans and that we should pursue together.

While I have named just a few ways in which the U.S. is active in Manicaland, I'd like to note that the U.S.'s overarching policy has not changed since 1980 when we were the first nation to recognize Zimbabwe's independence. We continue to work to enable Zimbabwe to become a just, prosperous and democratic country that meets the needs of its people, contributes to development in the region, and plays an important role in world affairs. We will not always agree with the government of Zimbabwe, but we will always attempt to maintain a respectful and open dialogue.

Before I conclude, I know that there is a lot of misinformation out there, so let me just make a few statements in relation to the U.S.'s policies on Zimbabwe. We remain open and willing to work with the government of Zimbabwe to support free and fair elections. As we head into a year of a constitutional referendum and election, let me stress a few things:

- 1) The U.S. backs principles and institutions, not individuals or parties.
- 2) It is not for the U.S. or foreigners to say how Zimbabwe should govern itself or its democratic practices. Instead, using the Zimbabwean constitution, laws, the Global Political Agreement, and the SADC Roadmap, Zimbabweans have agreed how they will comport themselves. It is against those commitments that Zimbabwe will be judged by the Zimbabwean people and friends of Zimbabwe alike. But, in any human interaction, one's credibility rests on maintaining one's word and one's honor. We look to all Zimbabweans to abide by their commitments and the unbiased rule of law as the country approaches a constitutional referendum and elections over the coming year.
- 3) The U.S. and international community -- but more importantly the Zimbabwean people -- look to the government and political leaders to ensure that these processes are credible, non-violent, and consistent with the rule of law.

- 4) As Secretary Clinton said in Cape Town in August, the United States is prepared to meet ‘action for action’ as Zimbabwe’s leaders honor their commitments. We support the democratic reform process underway since the start of the Global Political Agreement and, along with SADC and other friends of Zimbabwe, we will stand by the people as this process reaches its conclusion. U.S. policy toward Zimbabwe is not static and will respond positively to Zimbabwe’s progress on the roadmap to constitutional reform and elections. As the recent experience of the U.S. Chairmanship of the Kimberley Process as well as U.S. relations with Burma have shown over the past year, we are prepared to recognize and respond positively to positive – but tangible – reforms.

I am no stranger to the fact that Zimbabwe has gone through a tough decade or more, and the United States has taken actions over that period to put pressure on those responsible for the decline to return the country to peace, prosperity, and the rule of law. I also know that since 2009, the country and economy have seen a reversal of that decline and a return of stability. I am optimistic that the referendum and elections in the coming year will solidify Zimbabwe’s renaissance.

In conclusion, for those of you who I am meeting for the first time, I am all of the things that were noted in my bio – an Ambassador, a husband, a father – but I am also, I like to think, a good listener. I will begin my term here by listening and learning about the goals of the Zimbabwean people, and how the U.S. can be a good partner. I recognize your issues here are different than those of Zimbabweans in Harare or Matabeleland, for example, and I want to make this the first of many trips to Manicaland, so as to build a strong relationship with you here.

Thank you. I’m now very happy to answer your questions....