

## **U.S. Measures no Hindrance to Zim Progress: U.S. envoy**



*Ambassador Ray (middle) with Honorable Chikwinya and Nkosilathi Moyo of the ZOYP*

*Kwekwe, July 21, 2011:* Zimbabwe's economic progress is not dependent on the removal of U.S. targeted sanctions imposed on some Zimbabweans. Instead, growth depends on good policies designed to remove uncertainty and boost investor confidence, as well as improvement in the human rights situation, United States Ambassador Charles Ray said on Wednesday in Zimbabwe's midlands province.

“If we were to lift all targeted sanctions tomorrow... a few people here in Zimbabwe would have more money in their bank accounts and could do more shopping in the U.S. but without rationalizing the business regulatory environment and consistently implementing informed policies, there is not going to be a huge breakthrough in growth,” said Ambassador Ray during a roundtable discussion with youth representatives in Kwekwe.

The U.S. Ambassador was in Kwekwe for a previously scheduled youth dialogue meeting supported by the Embassy's Public Affairs Section and a luncheon with the business community organized by the local MP and businessman Settlement Chikwinya. The youth dialogue session, coordinated by the Zimbabwe Organization for Youth in Politics (ZOYP), was cleared by police on July 7<sup>th</sup> but police stopped the meeting shortly before it was scheduled to begin, dispatching over 25 local policemen to the venue.

Despite the cancellation of the dialogue and the subsequent postponement of the lunch with local business leaders, the Ambassador met with the organizers and some youth representatives who also included legislators based in the Midlands province, local government officials and members of the media.

During the discussion, Mbizo Member of Parliament, Settlement Chikwinya, told the Ambassador that the business community in the province wanted to discuss the potential for business opportunities with United States companies, in light of politicized information they had received regarding targeted sanctions. He noted that some elements of the inclusive government claim that without the removal of the targeted sanctions there would be no free and fair elections.

“If we are saying ZDERA (the Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act) exists, yet it has not been used against Zimbabwe because the country has not done anything about its arrears

to international financial institutions...why doesn't the United States do away with it?" asked the youthful legislator.

In his response, Ambassador Ray explained the difference between ZDERA and the Specially Designated Nationals List.

"My message to them is, don't use the policies of my government as an excuse not to do what you took an oath to do for your country. There are a lot of things that could be done to improve life that have nothing to do with the policies we have," said Ambassador Ray, citing the need to review indigenization laws, improve the rule of law and service debts with international lending institutions.

The roundtable discussion also covered youth issues, including education, civic engagement and lessons from U.S. history on the role of youth participation in constitution making.

Speaking on the aborted meeting, the Ambassador said the U.S. would continue its outreach to Zimbabweans to improve U.S.-Zimbabwe relations, which he described as not requiring much maintenance.

"The people-to-people relations between Zimbabweans and Americans do not need much maintenance; I have not encountered any personal hostility here. And, as for the appearance of hostility by some elements of the government, I recognize that a huge percentage of that is rhetoric," said Ambassador Ray.

"Today's unfortunate disruption will not, however, prevent the U.S. from reaching out in dialogue and partnership with the people of Zimbabwe. We will continue to do so and encourage all Zimbabweans to take advantage of their constitutional rights, to openly share their thoughts, ideas, dreams, and aspirations to make this country even greater," said Ambassador Ray.

Since May, the U.S. Embassy's Public Affairs Section has supported youth dialogue sessions as part of its efforts to engage youth in Zimbabwe to discuss and debate the ways in which they can contribute and bring about positive change in their immediate environments and the country.

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