

**Statement by Acting Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Africa
Stephanie Sullivan
“The Future of Zimbabwe”
U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
Subcommittee on African Affairs
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Chairman Flake, Ranking Member Booker, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the invitation to testify today on Zimbabwe.

The historic turn of events, featuring Robert Mugabe’s resignation, offers an extraordinary opportunity for Zimbabwe to set itself on a new path. Today, I provide this testimony to discuss our bilateral relationship, the events leading to the transition, and the U.S. position on future engagement.

Looking back over the last two decades, the U.S. relationship with the Zimbabwean government has been tense. The government’s repeated violations of its citizens’ human rights, its catastrophic economic mismanagement, and widespread corruption were obstacles, making it difficult to engage effectively to address Zimbabwe’s challenges. Deeply flawed elections in 2008 and 2013 further entrenched political divides in the country, diverting attention from much-needed reform.

Despite a tense bilateral relationship with the Government of Zimbabwe, the United States has maintained a strong relationship with the Zimbabwean people. Since Zimbabwe’s independence in 1980, we have provided significant development assistance in the areas of health, food security, education, and economic opportunity for citizens. Today, our assistance builds resilience by helping millions of Zimbabwe’s people battle HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, food insecurity, malnutrition, landmines, and human trafficking. Additionally, civil society programs bolster civic participation to advance democracy, human rights, and governance. These programs are critical in enabling Zimbabweans to hold their government accountable. None of our foreign assistance involves direct funding to the Government of Zimbabwe.

Over the last two years, competing factions within the ruling party – the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) – engaged in a bitter and public power struggle aimed at determining President Mugabe’s successor. Grace Mugabe’s rise in power unsettled others in the party who derived legitimacy from their ties to Zimbabwe’s independence struggles. These dynamics led to then-Vice

President Emmerson Mnangagwa's dismissal on November 6 and military actions purportedly in defense of President Mugabe, the party, and war veterans shortly after.

Over the next several days, the world watched as hundreds of thousands of Zimbabweans marched in the streets and parliamentary impeachment proceedings began. Mugabe resigned on November 21, ending his 37 years of rule.

The rapid turn of events appears to have unified the people of Zimbabwe around a sense of hope and possibility for the future. The change in government also offers an opportunity for reform that could allow the United States to re-engage in ways we have not recently been able to do. In support of the people, we will expect economic and political reform, including free and fair elections in 2018 according to Zimbabwe's constitution.

U.S. engagement with newly-inaugurated President Mnangagwa and his administration must be based on demonstrated behavior, not rhetorical intentions. President Mnangagwa has a window of opportunity to demonstrate his commitment to a democratic, just, healthy, and prosperous Zimbabwe. Our policy of re-engagement will focus on constitutional democracy, free and fair elections, respect for human rights and the rule of law, and an improved trade and investment climate, among other issues. The country has a strong civil society and experienced political opposition, and their voices must count in charting a path forward.

We must judge the new administration on its current and future actions. Along the way, there will be many actions that we will need to assess, as we look to re-engage. We will need to see free and fair elections. The military needs to return to its barracks and state institutions should be demilitarized. Perpetrators of abuses against civilians should be held accountable regardless of party affiliation. The government must engage in hard economic reforms, including addressing budget deficits, reforming the Indigenization Act, and reducing corruption. We will want to see improved protection of fundamental freedoms, a freer media, and a truth and reconciliation process. The people of Zimbabwe deserve these reforms, and many more.

We welcome President Mnangagwa's statement of intent to carry out economic reforms during his inauguration speech, and we are assessing the budget that was released last week. We believe critical political reforms deserve equal attention and cannot wait. In particular, elections must be free, fair, credible, and inclusive,

allowing Zimbabweans to choose their own leaders. Everyone in Zimbabwe should enjoy the rights to peaceful assembly without undue interference and to voice their opinions—and their vote—without fear.

We are working closely with international partners in Harare and in our respective capitals. Similarly, the State Department will continue to consult with Congress, the White House, and other agencies on our policies with respect to Zimbabwe. If President Mnangagwa wants improved diplomatic relations and access to international assistance and cooperation, particularly from the United States, it is our position that his government must first implement reforms.

The United States stands ready to help the government and the people of Zimbabwe to achieve their goals. U.S. private sector members are eager for improvements in the business climate that will encourage them to invest and trade. They see promise in agriculture, tourism, energy, and mining. People-to-people exchanges are important connectors as well. We will continue utilizing our robust and vibrant exchange programs to foster a better understanding of the United States amongst Zimbabwe's future leaders, and vice versa. We will continue to encourage Zimbabwe's highly educated populace to study in the United States. We will strengthen internal networks that build professional savvy and entrepreneurial skills.

We believe in a stable, peaceful, and democratic Zimbabwe that reflects the will of its people and provides for their needs.

Thank you very much. I welcome the opportunity to answer the Committee's questions.