

Concept Note on Grand National Union - GNU

May 2018

1. Indications are that the proclamation for the sitting of the nomination court for the 2018 election is imminent. Accordingly, it is urgent and important to make the necessary strategic decisions ahead of that proclamation. Whilst there is clear evidence of popular support against the coup and its regime, there is however no organised political framework or structure to harness that support into an electorally cohesive political formation capable of winning the election.
2. Such a political formation should be structured in a way that gives it the capacity to secure an electoral victory through a political model that unites and energises the nation. The political model should be in the form a “pre-election” Grand National Union (GNU) that is made up of the country’s key political formations opposed to the coup and its illegitimate regime.
3. Against this backdrop, it is important to note that in broad terms, Zimbabwe’s political society is made up of two polarised main groupings whose political roots and leanings derive from the then ZANU PF which was led by President Robert Mugabe; and the then MDC which was led by

Morgan Tsvangirai. Despite the November 2017 coup, which has paralysed ZANU PF, and the death of Morgan Tsvangirai in February 2018, which left MDC split, the political and guiding influences of the two founding leaders in their respective parties and the country in general remain very strong.

4. The polarised nature of Zimbabwe's political society effectively means that ZANU PF supporters will not vote for MDC, and conversely that MDC supporters will not vote for ZANU PF. This political stalemate, arising from the polarisation mentioned earlier, needs urgent attention to enable the supporters of the two parties to find each other and be given a political home which will enable them to vote together in common purpose in the forthcoming election.

5. In order to win the election, and resoundingly so, the proposed Grand National Union is the best and natural political home needed by both ZANU PF and MDC supporters. The pre-election GNU resonates well with the broad, if not full spectrum of Zimbabwe's political society because it recalls the positive experience and appeal of the 2009 to 2013 Government of National Unity that brought together three political formations.

6. This time round, rather than have a negotiated Government of National Unity as was the case with the GPA in 2009, the arrangement would be to have a Grand National Union as a political formation to be submitted to the electorate. This pre-election arrangement would be unique and popular with supporters of both ZANU PF and MDC. As already indicated, the arrangement would have two phases: a pre-election Grand National Union (GNU) and a post-election Government of National Unity (GNU).
7. This would make the 2018 election a referendum on the GNU through appropriate messaging on the applicable principles, ideology, government structure and composition thereof, and policy programmes. This messaging should include acknowledgment of the fact that whereas the 2009 to 2013 GNU was led by ZANU PF at the level of the Presidency, the 2018 GNU should be led by MDC at the same level, given the prevailing balance of forces since the coup.
8. Furthermore, the messaging should also acknowledge that whilst the 2009 to 2013 GNU facilitated the drafting and adoption of a new people-driven constitution, the 2018 GNU should complement the full implementation of the 2013 Constitution as the basis of the country's second republic within which the legacy of Zimbabwe's founding

father, President Mugabe will be restored, protected and his status and that of his family secured.

9. It should be noted that whereas, Advocate Nelson Chamisa and the MDC that he leads will bring a considerable and strategic electoral base, there is a need for that base to be complemented by President Mugabe's decisive influence of over the traditional ZANU PF electoral base. In particular but not limited to these cases, President Mugabe remains the leading voice in the electoral strongholds of Mashonaland West, Mashonaland Central and Mashonaland East provinces without which it is impossible for anyone ZANU PF to win a presidential election in Zimbabwe.
10. The same is true of President Mugabe's influence with traditional leaders across the country as well as in the pivotal communities of land reform beneficiaries, and particularly small holder farmers in the communal and A1 resettlement areas, beneficiaries of indigenisation and economic empowerment, veterans of Zimbabwe's liberation struggle and key security organs of the state in the police, President's Department and the Zimbabwe Defence Forces. The proposed pre and post election GNUs would give these key electoral communities a strategic political home and all but guarantee electoral victory. Furthermore, President Mugabe is a respected statesman

and iconic leader with influence which would benefit the proposed GNUs across SADC and the AU.

11. Lastly but not least, President Mugabe is in a position to assist the pre-election GNU with additional and key material resources including the identification of leadership skills and capacity to fill the gaps and to solidify the pre-election GNU to enable it to be a competent and credible Government of National Unity (GNU) after the election.

12. In the circumstances, the pre-election GNU needs to be based on a pre-election pact with at least three principals. The pact should specify that the presidential candidate will be from the MDC Alliance, namely Advocate Nelson Chamisa. One deputy president with political and government experience, capable of discharging the responsibility of gatekeeping in the GNUs will be nominated by President Mugabe as a representative of the National Patriotic Front (NPF) in accordance with that party's constitution. The other deputy president will be drawn from either the political formation led by Dr Thokozani Khupe or from the People's Rainbow Coalition (PRC). Consideration should be made to accommodate other political formations such as those led by Dr Dumiso Dabengwa, Dr Joyce Mujuru, Dr Simba Makoni and Mr Elton Mangoma

13. It is proposed that a panel of experts be set up as a matter of urgency and be charged with drafting a comprehensive agreement or pact outlining the principles and consequential arrangements for the pre-election GNU and the post-election GNU as proposed above in paragraph 7. This pact must be done with haste ahead of the sitting of the nomination court which is imminent.

14. To make the foregoing possible, and given that the sitting of the nomination court for the 2018 election is imminent, it is proposed that Advocate Nelson Chamisa and President Mugabe should meet as soon as possible under the strictest of confidence.

Thank you.