



U.S. Lawmaker Ramps Up Push to Repeal Zimbabwe Sanctions

Tatenda Gumbo | June 1, 2012

A United States lawmaker is calling on his government to repeal economic sanctions against Zimbabwe saying this is the only solution to bring full economic recovery and democratic transition to the nation.

Senator Jim Inhofe, a Republican and a leading Africa advocate, previously introduced a bill in Congress citing the formation of the government of national unity as an improvement in the country's situation.

His case was bolstered by recent comments by the United Nations Rights Chief Navi Pillay calling on the West to temporarily lift the so-called targeted measures, and now he is wants his bill passed.

The bill, known as Zimbabwe Sanctions Repeal Act 2011 was first introduced in 2010 but was not voted on by Senate. Under this legislation, economic sanctions would be lifted to restore the Zimbabwean economy, and in his words, assist reformers need to transition to democracy.

"I fully support UN Commissioner Navi Phillay's belief that economic sanctions are only hurting – not helping – the Zimbabwean people, over the last four years, Zimbabwe's power-sharing government has improved the economy and the general well-being of its people," said Inhofe in a statement.

"However, with the continuing inability to receive international loans or credits, Zimbabwe's economy is held back from achieving total fiscal prosperity, repealing these U.S. sanctions will provide Prime Minister Tsvangirai and his reformers the tools they need to return Zimbabwe to being called the 'Breadbasket of Africa' and engineer the transition to democracy that we all seek."

But independent political analyst Trevor Maisiri argued it's not yet time for the West to lift sanctions saying this would play into President Robert Mugabe's hands.

He told VOA reporter Tatenda Gumbo the international community needs to reflect, firstly, on why the sanctions were put in place.

"If the US is to remove these sanctions, I think it not be on the premise of the need to push the agenda of Tsvangirai's intention to bring reform to Zimbabwe but it must be for the broader perspective of Zimbabwe"

Center for Global Liberty and Prosperity policy analyst Marion Tupy said simply put, sanctions have not hurt the economy as much of the issues in Zimbabwe were self inflicted by government policy.

"I am cautiously in favor of easing sanctions for political not economic reasons," said Tupy, "from a political perspective it is certainly the case that ZANU-PF is using the sanctions in order not to fulfill its obligations on the global power-sharing agreement." It remains unclear when, or if the Zimbabwe Sanctions Repeal Act 2011 bill will be taken up for a vote by the U.S Senate.