



Remarks With Burkina Faso Foreign Minister Djibrill Bassole

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

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SECRETARY RICE: Good afternoon. I am very pleased to have just led with my co-chair, Foreign Minister Bassole of Burkina Faso, a roundtable on the crisis in Zimbabwe. We were joined by a number of representatives of governments from around the world and from Africa. There was strong expression of concern about the deteriorating situation in Zimbabwe, about the humanitarian conditions there. We heard from nongovernmental organizations about their difficulties in providing humanitarian assistance for the people of Zimbabwe and call upon the Zimbabwe Government to reverse its decision to permit – to not permit the NGOs from operating there and asked them to allow those NGOs to operate freely and without interference. We heard concerns about the intimidation and violence that is (inaudible) the run-up to the elections, about the intimidation of opponents of the regime. We heard concerns that the current conditions are not such in which free and fair elections could possibly be held.

We expressed our complete support for the efforts of the African institutions, the African Union and SADC to try and alleviate the crisis there and for the coming mission of Mr. Menkerios of the United Nations, a representative from the Secretary General to try and bring about an end to that crisis. But I think that the mood in the room was one of extraordinary concern and a desire to hear – have President Mugabe hear that there is great international concern about what he's doing to his country.

FOREIGN MINISTER BASSOLE: (Via interpreter) We have just concluded a roundtable under the initiative of Secretary Rice. I would like to thank her for that initiative and thank her for associating me to it. We wanted to convey a very strong message in the sense that all of the international community, not only the African Union and SADC must be involved through perhaps the Security Council in analyzing the situation on the ground and do something about it. Violence at this point will allow us to think that there will be a dramatic situation after the election next week and that will convey a image that is negative about Africa. Africa does not need such a image. Africa must concentrate now in portraying a better image and must concentrate on the efforts for development and fighting poverty. So all the Security Council can do in order to remediate the situation and to bring peace to the people of Zimbabwe and guarantee free and fair elections will be welcome.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary – thank you. You just have been to the Middle East and (inaudible). We all heard your critical remarks of Israeli settlement policy. There is a resolution in the United Nations Security Council with regard to the settlements. Does that mean the U.S. will be supportive of such a resolution? And on Iraq how sensitive are you going to be towards the issues of sovereignty in the forthcoming agreement?

SECRETARY RICE: I will answer the question, although I want to be certain to answer a question on Zimbabwe at some point. Just a moment. Just one moment. First of all, I do not believe, and I said so when I was in the Middle East, that this is the time for the Security Council to take up the issues associated with the Middle East peace process. The parties are working very hard. The United States has been very clear in its criticism of the obligations of the Roadmap that have not been met and are not being met and, indeed, of this settlement activity. But I do not think it's time for the Security Council to take this up. And of course, Iraq is a sovereign country and the United States is engaged in trying to find ways for our forces to operate legally within the country, just for this period of time. This is not a matter of Iraqi sovereignty. We're working with the Iraqi Government. The Iraqi Government is quite capable of representing its interests and we fully and completely respect its sovereignty in the negotiations that are going on.

Yes.

QUESTION: Did the Council decide to take any specific actions on Zimbabwe beyond just expressing concern? Did you talk about sending monitors?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, this was a roundtable. This was not a Council meeting. But I understand that there will – it will be taken up in the Council next week. The details of that I think will be made available through Zai Khalilzad, our Ambassador who is going to be permanent representative and acting as president of the Council at that time. But today's roundtable was principally to share views, to express concern, but to also send a very strong message that what is going on in Zimbabwe is simply unacceptable.

QUESTION: What – what's the United States stance-- if the Iranian Government does not accept the incentives package?

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you. Thank you. We've talked about Zimbabwe. I think we've had enough. Do you want to talk – Zimbabwe, yes.

QUESTION: How do you respond to those who say that putting more pressure on Mugabe is not helpful for the Zimbabwe people themselves?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, I don't see anything that President Mugabe has done that has been helpful for the Zimbabwean people. So maybe it's time for international pressure. Thank you.

QUESTION: (Inaudible)Minister, do you support, again, the same question of imposing sanctions or taking particular measures against Zimbabwe in order to make fair and free elections?

FOREIGN MINISTER BASSOLE: (Via interpreter.) We haven't gotten to that point yet of sanctions. (Inaudible.)

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 [BACK TO TOP](#)