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***Remarks by Alejandro D. Wolff, U.S. Deputy Permanent Representative, on Zimbabwe, at the Security Council stakeout, April 29, 2008***

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**Ambassador Wolff:** Good afternoon, as you just heard we had actually an excellent and quite sobering briefing from the Secretariat on the situation in Zimbabwe. We were struck in particular by his characterization of the situation as the worst humanitarian crisis since independence, and of a situation that was increasingly rendering the election process illegitimate. So we had numerous delegations express their concern and called for a reinvigorated effort by SADC and the AU and greater involvement by the UN in dealing with this crisis.

**Reporter:** Did the United States specifically back the idea of some kind of UN fact-finding mission or special envoy to Zimbabwe?

**Ambassador Wolff:** Yes we did. Several delegations spoke before I did - raised it specifically and we thought that was a good idea worthy of our support.

**Reporter:** How much support is there in the council for that - for the envoy and the fact-finding mission?

**Ambassador Wolff:** Well, it's not unanimous, let me put it that way and I think it is dividing up in predictable terms.

**Reporter:** Ambassador, how will the U.S. - perhaps in conjunction with its allies - be following up on this? What is the next step? Where do you take it from here?

**Ambassador Wolff:** Well, I suggested also given the utility of the briefing and the sobering facts that were shared and the concern expressed. And let me underscore that, almost every delegation if I recall correctly did express concern. We thought it might be useful also and regret that this couldn't happen in an open briefing of the Council.

**Reporter:** When would that be, sir?

**Ambassador Wolff:** Well, we haven't scheduled any but as I mentioned this is a first step. We are looking at the situation on the ground. We shouldn't lose sight of the fact that the most important thing is the situation in Zimbabwe - the humanitarian crisis, the political crisis that is underway and the ability of the Zimbabwean people's voice to be respected.

**Reporter:** Will this idea of a special representative or fact-finding mission necessitate Council approval? Do you think that is possible to get the Council to approve it or can you do it some other way through the Secretary-General's office?

**Ambassador Wolff:** Well, I don't think it's up for the Security Council to decide on that. That's

essential up for the Secretary-General. We can opine on it. There's a number of delegations who don't believe the Council should be engaged on this which was regrettable. I think it is clear that the degree of concern, the nature of the threats posed by instability in Zimbabwe - whether it's populations flows, whether it's arms shipments, and the fact that SADC is involved, that fact that the AU is involved demonstrates that there is an international dimension to this.

**Reporter:** Ambassador Wolff, Zimbabwe's Ambassadors made a lot - a number of times made the comparison to Florida in 2000 and said this is a vote dispute. How do you - I mean do you see anything to that analogy? They're saying it took six weeks then, why not six weeks for them? What do you think?

**Ambassador Wolff:** I'm not even going to comment. It's a ludicrous comparison and all you have to do is talk to the Zimbabwean opposition and see what their views are on how America conducts its elections.

**Reporter:** Ambassador, did anybody bring up the possibility of sanctions? I thought I heard something about that recently.

**Ambassador Wolff:** Not in my hearing. I don't recall anyone mentioning it at this point.

**Reporter:** Mr. Ambassador, was there any agreement at all - even for instance on the humanitarian side - to try and step up aid since that would seem to be one issue that the Council might agree on?

**Ambassador Wolff:** Actually, I'm not sure the Council could agree on that either. The Council is divided as I mentioned, probably in predictable ways. There are a number of governments who were quite outspoken about the importance of the Council remaining engaged, the international community remaining engaged, pushing as much as possible but there were others who have different views and think that the situation deserves more time and that ultimately it is up for the Zimbabwean people to resolve it themselves. In a situation like that we'll have to wait and see what if anything the Council is in a position to do.

**Reporter:** Would the Americans support an arms embargo?

**Ambassador Wolff:** You know I haven't gotten instructions on that but it strikes me that we would, given the situation. Thank you.