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Remarks by Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, U.S. Permanent Representative, on Zimbabwe, at the Security Council Stakeout, July 11, 2008

Hello, as I've been telling you for several days that barring vetoes we had the votes for the resolution to pass. And today we saw the resolution was vetoed by Russia and China. You heard me speak about the disturbing change, in our view, in the Russian position given their support for the G8 statement; that they are a member of the G8.

But I do want to say a word or two about the performance of South Africa. It was particularly disturbing also because given the history of South Africa, a country that has emerged from a very difficult period of history, Apartheid, where international sanctions played an important role in encouraging transformation negotiations to bring about this new development, the change in South Africa. For its representative to be protecting the horrible regime in Zimbabwe—a regime that's responsible for not only a political crisis but a humanitarian crisis in the country—and to work with that regime to fragment the opposition to it; that is particularly disturbing.

There isn't anything serious going on in terms of the negotiations, the South African effort, President Mbeki's effort so far has been a failure. And we are, and I am, encouraged personally by trends one sees in South Africa itself where other leaders—Mr. Zuma, Archbishop Tutu, unions and others have spoken the conscience of this country on this issue. We believe that the international community—we, those of us who stood with the people of Zimbabwe today—will continue to focus on this issue and look for ways to be helpful.

I hope that the people do not get disappointed. The people of Zimbabwe, they should take heart from the fact that a clear majority of the members of the Council stood with them and we will continue to do so.

Thank you.

Reporter: Mr. Ambassador, why did you push it to a vote? I mean, you could have taken more time for consultations. What was the necessity of bringing it to a vote today?

Ambassador Khalilzad: We have been talking for a few days about having a vote. One would have considered delaying a vote if there was the offer of working together on some modification or minor changes with regard to the text.

In fact the Russian representative told us they did not believe in sanctions at this point against Mugabe and 13 others. That they did not believe in an arms embargo which was another sanctions that was a key element of the draft resolution. We have made, as you all know, political requests, demands, of the regime. We set conditions for free and fair elections that did not exist in our PRST several days ago, a

couple of weeks ago. And that did not impress the regime. What they wanted was yet another request, a resolution that we only, I'm assuming, would have only made requests of the regime, without incentivizing it to take what we are saying seriously because they did thumb their noses at what we asked of them before. So given that we had very fundamental differences in terms of approach, a delay would not have changed things.

At the same time we have been patient. We did give Russia time. They asked two, three days ago to give them until today. They said they couldn't engage because their leaders were traveling and they were not in Moscow and we did give them until today. And what they came with was a nyet and you saw that today.

Reporter: Ambassador, on the facilitation question for (inaudible) Mbeki, harsh words there for the South African government, what exactly have they not done that you would have liked to see and also do you think it will take a change in the South African government to bring a break through when it comes to Zimbabwe.

Ambassador Khalilzad: Well, we believe what is needed is the regional efforts, President Mbeki efforts, which have not produced success, needs to be complimented by international efforts by the appointment of the special representative of the Secretary General. What we are surprised by is what appears, President Mbeki actions appear to be protecting Mr. Mugabe, and to be working hand in glove with him at times while he, Mugabe, uses violent means to fragment and weaken the opposition. President Mbeki uses diplomacy in bringing factional leaders within the MDC, the opposition, to fragment the opposition by playing with the politics of the opposition. We are concerned; we are also encouraged by the trends that we see inside South Africa. I think he is out of touch with the trends inside his own country and that is a source of disappointment given the history of South Africa in particular that they have, the things that they have themselves benefited from to improve their situation, they are opposing when it comes to their neighbor Zimbabwe.

Reporter: Ambassador, talking about China's veto, some point, like in Sudan, it is the business interest with that regime that may have led to this veto. What is your reading?

Ambassador Khalilzad: Well it was disturbing that China, in the end, joined Russia in the veto. As you know trade unions in South Africa stopped a ship that was carrying Chinese arms intended for Zimbabwe. We were disappointed by the Chinese actions and we certainly take note of that.

Reporter: Ambassador, South Africa did circulate, rather floated an idea, a compromise, to have a 30-day warning to Zimbabwe and then the sanctions would kick in. And number two do you think we are seeing the legacy of colonialism working in a bad way where South Africa, Zimbabwe, other countries in the region can't distinguish the fact that colonialism is not the only evil, that their own native leaders can be also be oppressive as well.

Ambassador Khalilzad: Well, there almost is a sense of deficit of expectation from local leaders, hat cannot be held accountable to the standards, in terms of human rights. This was not a judgment about the elections; we made that judgment already, a couple of weeks ago. This was a judgment about ongoing violence, the judgment of violation of human rights; this was about incentivizing progress, cooperation going forward. It was being realistic, that without pressure Mugabe was not going to be incentivized to cooperate in ways that are needed. You know the leader of the opposition is in an embassy of a foreign country, while an election, the president of Zimbabwe sits in...

Reporter: ..but isn't colonialism a culprit as well

Ambassador Khalilzad: Well, of course history has not been a friend to the people of Africa. As an anti-colonial, non-colonial country ourselves, empathize with those who are anti-colonial, there is no question about that. We just celebrated our independence, but you've got to get on, make progress to have responsibility institutions follow formulas that produce success in other post-colonial countries and you can't be forever held down by reference to the history of colonialism.

Reporter: (inaudible)

Ambassador Khalilzad: Wait, I want to say one word about that. There was an approach made about considering such a thing [South Africa 30-day compromise] but that approach was quickly withdrawn.

Reporter: Withdrawn? By South Africa?

Ambassador Khalilzad: By South Africa.

Reporter: On Darfur, if Ocampo does move to indict

Ambassador Khalilzad: I don't want to talk about that today.

Reporter: Bashir, Would the US support it?

Ambassador Khalilzad: Today we talk about Zimbabwe.

Reporter: Ambassador, if the situation changes, quickly, for better or for worse, will you revisit the Zimbabwe issue?

Ambassador Khalilzad: Well we will be focusing on it, I said in my statement we are going to be, this is an important issue for us, it is important for the veto, you saw that nine members were supportive of this, so we will continue to focus on this and we will, we will come back to it no doubt.