



MDC ALLIANCE LAND REFORM POSITION

PRESS CONFERENCE, 3 SEPTEMBER 2020

Introduction

- The MDC-Alliance acknowledges the land reform program as a necessary correction of colonial injustices. We noted that the approach used to address historical imbalances was not the most desirable as evidence over the past 20 years demonstrates. We are importing food when we used to feed other nations. 8,6 million of our population are food insecure notwithstanding over US\$6 billion reportedly invested in Command Agriculture in the last three years.
- We note with concern that the Global Compensation Deed has been concluded without the participation of Parliament and key stakeholders in breach of the Constitution and the rule of law, in particular section 295(4), which requires that any compensation for previously acquired agricultural land must be assessed and paid in terms of an Act of Parliament.
- An arbitrary figure of US\$3,5 billion has been “agreed to” by the State as being a global figure that will be paid as compensation; however, there is no clarity as to where these funds will come from, who the beneficiaries of the funds will be or how this figure has been computed. The lack of transparency on a matter that concerns public debt and public interest does not bode well.

Land reform irreversible [Clause 3.8 SMART]

- The MDC Alliance restates that the land reform program is irreversible. However, there is a need to rationalize the process through a comprehensive land audit that ensures **title** and **security** of tenure to the citizens who are beneficiaries.
- The MDC has always emphasized the need to bring finality to Zimbabwe’s land question through a national and inclusive process aimed at a sustainable, equitable, transparent, just, lawful and economically efficient rationalization of the ownership and use of land.



Compensation

- Adequate and fair compensation is necessary to ensure viability and national stability. Section 295(4) of the Constitution expressly requires that the compensation payable must be assessed and paid in terms of **an Act of Parliament**.
- As a social democratic party, we emphasize that the measures in the land policy must include labour affected by the land reform program. The 400 000¹ former commercial farm workers and 150 000 seasonal farm workers that have been totally ignored in the correctional phase of the land reform program must be prioritised and compensated. We call for urgent attention to be given to their plight and for their concerns to be taken into account.
- Property rights are sacrosanct and security of investment must be upheld. Property rights, including those contained in international agreements are inviolable and cannot be compromised.
- We accept that it is necessary to remedy the gaps that arose on account of the land reform program in the national interest to ensure that we return to agricultural productivity and a sustainable and inclusive system of land tenure. However, it is our firm view that mishandling the correctional phase of the land reform program through a lack of transparency, adequate consultation and legality may create new problems that will haunt us and impede the very objectives of agricultural productivity and sustainability we collectively aim for.
- The rule of law must be upheld and there must be wide consultation of all stakeholders to ensure that there is closure to this important national issue.

What will a new administration under an MDC Alliance Govt do? Alternatives

¹ The original press statement referred to 4 million farm workers. Statement corrected on 04/09/2020.



- Bring finality to the land question: at present, people are still fighting over land invasions, double plot allocations and boundary disputes. This must all be resolved.
- Deal with security of tenure: newly resettled farmers will be given title to land so that land owners have both land use value and exchange value that they can use to access credit lines.
- Preserve the sanctity of BIPPA and BIT agreements.
- Finance agricultural infrastructure: In order to fully empower the newly resettled farmers there is need for seasonal, capital and land loans which can be provided by commercial banks as well as the Rural Development Fund.
- Set up an impartial, independent, well-resourced, professional agency - the Land Commission, as provided for under s296 of the Constitution.
- The restoration of collateral security in land, to facilitate sustainable funding of the agricultural sector, consistent with the constitution of Zimbabwe.
- Granting occupation certificates to existing farmers.
- De-racialise land ownership. Improved farm production and agricultural productivity is not a race issue. It is a product of training, investment in farming and correct, modern infrastructure supported by adequate funding. Good international relations are good for export and farming as a business.
- A comprehensive and transparent land audit to eliminate multiple farm ownerships and promote productive land utilisation.
- Land Tax, an MDC-Alliance government will introduce an appropriate land occupation and use tax that encourages production on titled land and facilitate provision of off farm infrastructure by the State.



- An MDC Alliance government will promote and facilitate the uptake of new technology in the agricultural sector from farm level to agro-industries. This will also include supporting the use of sustainable energy sources such as solar energy in the agricultural sector and electronic land management system that publishes information on land ownership, production activities and ecological location.