

**This Briefing note seeks to make clear the circumstances of the clean-up exercise.**

## **1. RATIONALE FOR THE CLEAN-UP OPERATIONS**

- 1.1 Right across Zimbabwe over the past few years, there was an unprecedented and menacing influx of illegal vendors, traders, street dwellers, vagrants and loiterers compounded by the mushrooming of street garages, illegal structures, shebeens, car washing outlets and the unbecoming behaviour of commuter omnibus touts in and around the Central Business District areas. The orderliness of the cities had seriously been compromised and unscrupulous business practices had reached alarming proportions.
- 1.2 The action to rid our urban environments of illegal structures and unlicensed trading premises in the form of flea markets, illegal shacks, and pavement trading cabins is therefore seriously meant to cleanse those areas that had since become havens for thieves and criminals, touts, illegal immigrants, illegal foreign currency dealers, drug traffickers, street dwellers, brothel operators and prostitution. The clean-up enhances the aesthetic value of the cities as well as addressing the sanitary and health concerns of urban centers.
- 1.3 Health studies have shown that overcrowding and squalid living conditions subject the human kind to disease outbreaks such as Cholera, Diarrhoea and Tuberculosis to mention but a few. Consequently it would be inhuman and abuse of fundamental rights if the authorities fail to take action.
- 1.4 Immediately after the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2005 Parliamentary Elections, Zimbabwe plunged into unexpected economic morass characterized by an acute shortage of basic commodities, fuel and the re-emergence of black market activities in foreign currency and illegal dealings in precious stones.

## **Proliferation of illegal business premises and practices**

- 1.5 The scarcity of basic commodities caused panic among members of the public, resulting in the resurgence of hoarding of basic commodities, over pricing and black market activities. Unauthorised tuck shops and unsafe illegal structures especially in the urban areas provided a ready sanctuary and market for hoarded basic commodities, which would be sold to the public at exorbitant prices. Furthermore the illegal structures that sprouted over the years also served as hideouts or havens for criminal elements and activities.
- 1.6 Places such as the renowned *Siyaso* and Market Square, which were originally set by the Government to promote entrepreneurship among its citizenry, had become viable and ready markets of stolen property, often disguised as second hand goods.

## **Breakdown of Corporate Governance and Business Ethics**

- 1.7 Corporate governance, generally defined as the system by which business entities are planned, controlled and directed was under serious threat. The sprouting of illegal housing structures in the urban and peri-urban areas further compounded the situation. Most towns and cities had lost their glow and befitting urban statuses, heavily infested by conspicuous malpractices such as vending, touting, black market, trading of basic commodities and foreign currency dealings. Approach in the business environment depicted that of everyone conducting his/her own business without regulation, contrary to city by-laws, business ethics and morals among the Zimbabwean people.
- 1.8 The mushrooming of these illegal premises has seen the government losing billions in potential revenue, which could otherwise be used to enhance living standards and infrastructure development in the country.

## **Illegal Dealings in Foreign Currency and Precious Stones**

- 1.9 In provinces with rich gold deposits, illegal panning activities and illegal dealings in precious minerals were rampant, a situation detrimental to our national efforts to turnaround the economy. The illicit panners and gold dealers apart from plundering the country's resources, were also settling themselves everywhere deemed convenient to their unlawful operations, and in the process have caused extensive environmental degradation.
- 1.10 Conceivably, these economic challenges which are largely contrived machinations by enemies of the state bent on discrediting the government and its leadership, demanded a decisive and appropriate response. Thus the Local Authorities and Central Government have moved to restore sanity to the urban environment.
- 1.11 It is appreciated that some honest small-business operators and informal traders have suffered loss of business and would therefore have difficulty in meeting their family commitments but it has to be understood that any Local Authority operates within and enforces laws and by-laws which are meant to ensure orderliness, civility and decency in the conduct of business by entrepreneurs. Operating any form of business from prohibited or undesignated places essentially constitutes an offence in terms of Local Authority planning, building and operating by-laws.
- 1.12 After giving due notices to the target groups, the clean-up exercise kicked-off on Friday May 18, 2005 with the arrest of touts, street dwellers, illegal vendors, traffic offenders, loiterers, public drinkers and car-washers. The operation has been sustained with the destruction of illegal flea markets and structures at bus termini, the removal of vendors from all undesignated areas within the Cuds, the demolition of illegal structures in high-density suburbs and even rural service centers or Growth Points countrywide.