**BILL WATCH 16/2019**

**[27th March 2019]**

**The Senate is Sitting This Week**

**The National Assembly has Adjourned to Tuesday 7th May**

**In the Senate This Week**

**Yesterday**

**Cyclone Idai**

The Senate resumed sitting yesterday, Tuesday 26th March, having been in recess for the previous two weeks.  At the end of Thursday’s sitting it is expected to adjourn until Tuesday 7th May.

Yesterday’s proceedings were focussed on Cyclone Idai, which hit eastern parts of the country during the recess.

Senators observed a minute’s silence in honour of the victims of the cyclone.  The President of the Senate informed Senators that the Speaker of the National Assembly, on behalf of Presiding Officers and the Administration of Parliament, had made a statement regarding the unfortunate and devastating effects of the cyclone and indicated the modalities through which Members and staff could make donations in cash and kind to assist victims of the cyclone.

Ministerial Statement on Cyclone Idai  The Minister of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing made a Ministerial Statement on the magnitude of the damage caused by Cyclone Idai and the measures being taken to ameliorate its effects *[*[*link*](http://www.veritaszim.net/node/3469)*]*.  Senators had several questions, to which the Minister responded at length; he rejected allegations that distribution of relief had been subjected to political interference.

Ministerial Statement on Deployment of Defence Forces *[*[*link*](http://www.veritaszim.net/node/3470)*]*  The Minister of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs repeated to Senators the uninformative Ministerial statement already made in the National Assembly on the deployment of the Defence Forces to assist the Police Force, not only in January 2018 but also on 1st August 2018.  Senators had no follow-up questions.

**Today and tomorrow**

**Bills**

No Bills are scheduled to come before Senators this week – because since the Senate approved the Finance Bill and the Appropriation (2019) Bill at the end of January, the National Assembly has not passed any further Bills for onward transmission to the Senate.  Senators cannot expect to see any Bills from the National Assembly until mid-May.

**PLC Adverse Report on Command Agriculture Regulations**

At their sitting on 14th March, Senators discussed the adverse report by the Parliamentary Legal Committee [PLC] on the Agricultural Marketing Authority (Command Agriculture Scheme for Domestic Crop, Livestock and Fisheries Production) Regulations, SI 247/2018 and were inclined to agree with the PLC’s opinion that the provisions for criminal penalties for purely contractual breaches were unconstitutional.  They decided, however, that the responsible Minister, the Minister of Lands, Agriculture, Water, Climate and Rural Resettlement, should have an opportunity to defend the regulations before the full Senate should be he wish to do so [this despite the Minister’s non-acceptance of an invitation to appear before the PLC].

This item is way down the Senate’s agenda for today, so it may not come up this week.

**Approval of International Agreements**

Heading today’s agenda are motions by the Minister for Senate approval of two agreements:

Africa Continental Free Trade Area Agreement  This was approved by the National Assembly on 14th March.

African Charter on Democracy Elections and Governance  This was approved by the National Assembly on 19th March.

**Question Time [Thursday]**

The Senate’s regular Question Time is scheduled for Thursday afternoon, after which the Senate is expected to adjourn until Tuesday 7th May.

**In the National Assembly 19th to 21st March**

**Cyclone Idai**

Tuesday afternoon saw MPs observing a minute’s silence in honour of the victims of Cyclone Idai, and hearing and discussing a full Ministerial Statement on damage caused by the cyclone and measures being taken in response.  The Speaker made a statement on behalf of the Presiding Officers and Administration of Parliament on the devastating effects of the cyclone and appealed to MPs and staff of Parliament to make donations in cash and kind to assist the victims of the cyclone.

**Approval of African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance**

Also on Tuesday afternoon the House approved this important Charter.  Once the Senate has followed suit with its approval, the way will be clear for the President sign the Instrument of Ratification on behalf of Zimbabwe and have it lodged with the African Union, thereby making Zimbabwe a State party to the Charter.

**New chair and members of Portfolio Committee on Mines and Mining Development**

On Thursday the Speaker announced that all former members of this committee, except Hon Nduna and Hon Mliswa [the former chairperson], had been reappointed and that Hon Mkaratigwa would chair the committee.  The tenure of the Privileges Committee investigating allegations of soliciting for a bribe by Hon Mliswa and other members has been extended to 9th May.

**New chair for Portfolio Committee on Transport and Infrastructural Development**

The Speaker also announced Hon Gorerino as the new chairperson of this committee, the membership of which remains unchanged except for Hon Nduna, who had ceased to be a member.

**Companies and Other Business Entities Bill**

On Thursday Hon Mataranyika, who chairs the portfolio committee on Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs, presented the committee’s report on the public hearings conducted around the country on this Bill.  The report will be available on our website [www.veritaszim.net](http://www.veritaszim.net) shortly.  MPs then started their contributions to the Second Reading debate, which had not been completed by the adjournment.  The debate will, therefore, continue when Parliament reassembles in May.

**Ministerial Statement on Global Fund Counterpart Finance Policy**

The statement by the Minister of Finance and Economic Development was presented to the House on his behalf by the Minister of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs.  It will be posted on our website [www.veritaszim.net](http://www.veritaszim.net) shortly.

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