



**REPORT OF THE BILATERAL VISIT TO RUSSIA BY A PARLIAMENTARY
DELEGATION LED BY HON. ADVOCATE JACOB FRANCIS
NZWIDAMILIMO MUDENDA, SPEAKER OF THE PARLIAMENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF ZIMBABWE**

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Hon. Advocate Jacob Francis Nzwidamilimo Mudenda, Speaker of the Parliament of Zimbabwe, led a Parliamentary Delegation on a Bilateral Visit to Moscow, Russia, from 26 to 30 September 2022. This, in fulfillment of Zimbabwe's foreign policy as articulated by His Excellency, the President, Cde. Dr. Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa, that **“Zimbabwe is a friend of all and an enemy to none”**. Additionally, the Bilateral Visit was to enhance Parliamentary Diplomacy. To that end, the visit culminated in the signing of a Cooperation Agreement between the National Assembly of Zimbabwe and the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation on 27 September 2022.

1.2 The delegation comprised the following Members of Parliament who are also members of the Portfolio Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade:

Hon. Webster Kotiwani Shamu, Member of Parliament and Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade;

Hon. Nyasha Masoka, Member of Parliament;

Hon. Alignia Samson, Member of Parliament; and

Hon. Godfrey Dube, Member of Parliament.

1.3 From the outset, the delegation wishes to extend its sincere gratitude to the following for their sterling work in ensuring that the Parliamentary engagement to Russia was successful, fruitful and memorable:

H.E. Mr. Nikolai Krasilnikov, Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Zimbabwe and his staff; and

Mr. Muponisi Dzapasi, Charge d’Affaires, Embassy of the Republic of Zimbabwe and his staff.

1.4 The well thought out and comprehensive programme which was prepared by the Hosts included the following highlights:

- Meeting with Hon. V.V. Volodin, Chairman of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation;

- Hon. Speaker's address to the State Duma at the plenary session;
- Meeting with Hon. Valentina Matvienko, Speaker of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation.

2.0 Wreath laying ceremony at the Kremlin Wall

2.1 The official programme started off on a somber note with the wreath laying ceremony at the Kremlin Wall. In honour of the memory of fallen heroes, the Hon. Speaker laid a wreath at the tomb of the unknown soldier with Hon. Members laying bouquets of flowers. To conclude the programme at the Kremlin Wall, the delegation was taken on a tour of the tombs. Russian historical luminaries including Suslov, Stalin, Kalinin, Dzerzhinsky and Brezhnev are interred at the Kremlin Wall.

3.0 Meeting with the Chairman of the of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation

3.1 On 27 September 2022, the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation led by the Hon. Speaker Volodin hosted the Hon. Speaker and his Delegation at the State Duma Buildings. In attendance during this meeting were multi-party representatives from the State Duma who despite their political differences were united in their quest to strengthen the existing relations between the Parliament of Zimbabwe and the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation. Accordingly, the Host Speaker welcomed this opportunity to exchange views on issues of mutual interest, particularly as it comes in the aftermath of the global COVID -19 pandemic which prevented face to face interaction.

3.2 Hon. Advocate Mudenda extended his appreciation to the host Chairperson for the excellent hospitality and special logistics put in place for his delegation. Within the context of the cordial relations that exist between Zimbabwe and Russia and by extension between the two legislatures, the Hon. Speaker underscored the importance of such interface which has been characterized by high level visits between Harare and Moscow, including the visit by H.E. President Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa. Indeed, such interactions give impetus to development of permanent relations.

- 3.2.1 In this context, he welcomed the Agreement of Cooperation between the two legislatures as a tool that will compel both parties to implement areas of cooperation. Accordingly, the two Speakers pledged to strengthen the relations between the two legislatures not only through bilateral meetings and consultations, but also the interface of specialized Committees focusing on specific areas of cooperation such as agriculture and mining where Russia has expertise and Zimbabwe stands to benefit. The interactions must be pointed, dynamic and mutually beneficial.
- 3.2.2 Hon. Advocate Mudenda called for accelerated implementation of signed agreements if the two countries are to derive any benefit from the cooperation.
- 3.3 The two Speakers acknowledged the support the two countries have rendered each other at the international fora, with Russia having stood by Zimbabwe in 2008 when they vetoed a UN Draft Resolution that would have imposed sanctions on Zimbabwe while the Parliament of Zimbabwe has supported the Russian position at such international fora such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union. The illegal sanctions imposed by the United States of America and the West have brought untold suffering the generality of the people. Hon. Advocate Mudenda chronicled the historical background of the land reform programme which attracted the wrath of the West. The two sides agreed to continue supporting each other at the international fora emphasizing that friendships should be based on the principles of trust, reciprocity, respect for each other's interests and sovereignty. In this context, national sovereignty must be based on the UN Charter which states that all states are equal.
- 3.4 Russia values its relationship with Africa hence the Russia-Africa Conference with African Parliaments. Due to the exigencies associated with the COVID – 19 pandemic, the Conference has been in abeyance. Consultations with African countries are underway on the suitable date for the next Conference. In this regard, an invitation was extended to Hon. Advocate Mudenda and his delegation to attend the Conference.
- 3.5 Additionally, Russia will send representatives to attend the 78th Executive Committee of the African Parliamentary Union (APU) and the 44th Conference of

the APU scheduled for Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, from 5 to 10 November 2022. Russia has submitted a request for an Observer status at the APU. Hon. Mudenda assured his counterpart that the Conference which is being held in one of the world's seven wonders will live up to its billing.

3.6 In acknowledging Russia's big brother role in geo-politics, the Hon. Speaker encouraged Russia to continue on its positive trajectory in exercising its influence in the geo-politics of the world.

4.0 **Signing of the Cooperation Agreement between the National Assembly of Zimbabwe and the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation**

4.1 Following the fruitful interactions, the two Speakers proceeded to sign the Cooperation Agreement between the National Assembly of Zimbabwe and the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation. The Agreement will govern the socio-economic and political cooperation between the two legislatures and is anchored on mutual trust and understanding.

4.2 Through engagement between specialized Committees, the two legislatures will share experiences and best practices for mutual development. (Refer to Annexure 1 for the full text of the Agreement).

5.0 **Address by Hon. Advocate Jacob Francis Nzwidamilimo Mudenda, Speaker of the Parliament of Zimbabwe to the Plenary Session of the State Duma**

5.1 On this historic Bilateral Visit, the Hon. Speaker was accorded the rare privilege to address the Plenary Session of the State Duma. In his address, the Hon. Speaker referred to the existing strong bilateral relations between Russia and Zimbabwe which predate Zimbabwe's independence when Russia proffered arms to the cause. Additionally, Russia unflinchingly supported the country's struggle for independence.

5.2 The Hon. Speaker gave a historical context of the Russian Federation's special operation in Ukraine which is predicated on the legitimate historical security concerns arising from the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's (NATO) and the United States of America's unrelenting expansionist policies which pose a danger to the Russian Federation's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

- 5.3 Furthermore, he articulated Zimbabwe position which supports concerted efforts towards a peaceful resolution to the conflict in the spirit of multilateralism and solidarity as defined by article 2 of the United Nations Charter. In this context, the Hon. Speaker commended the Russian Federation and Ukraine for initiating dialogue seeking a peaceful resolution to the conflict as led by President Erdogan of Turkey.
- 5.4 The Hon. Speaker condemned the use of sanctions as they result in untold human suffering, loss of life and infrastructural destruction on both sides of the conflict. He, therefore, underscored the importance of earnest and constructive dialogue. (Refer to Annexure 2 for the full text of the speech)

6.0 Excursions

- 6.1 **Guided tour of the Kremlin:** On 26 September, the delegation was taken on a guided tour of the magnificent and historical heritage site which incorporates the Armory Chamber (Museum) and the architectural ensemble of the Cathedral Square comprising the Assumption, Archangel and Annunciation Cathedrals among other majestic features. The impressive Armory Chamber is home to a collection of artefacts with a historical and cultural value preserved over centuries. The artefacts include state regalia, ceremonial royal clothes and coronation dresses as well as an extensive collection of gold and silverware.
- 6.2 **Tour of the Zaryadye Park:** On the 27th of September 2022, the Hon. Speaker and his delegation were treated to an eight (8) minute interactive video which virtually transported them to some of Russia's tourist attractions. In addition, the delegation was virtually transported to the formation of Moscow focusing on cultural monuments, protected areas and historical places.
- 6.3.1 **Tour of the Patriot Park:** Additionally on the same day, the Speaker's Delegation undertook a guided tour of the Patriot Park which is the largest museum in Russia dedicated to the display of military armorment and weaponry used by Russia and a collection from eleven (11) foreign countries used during the Second World War. The museum features armored vehicles and weaponry in use then by the Russian Imperial Army, the Russian Empire as well as during World War I and II. The Delegation was impressed by the concerted effort of the Russian people to keep their military heritage for the current generation and posterity. For

that reason this Museum is open to the public, including young people and school children who interfaced with the delegation. The involvement of young people and school children in such tours affirmed the national policy which demands that such generation be exposed to the military patriotic education. As the delegation left the museum building, the delegation was shown an array of different types of war planes and jet fighters as well as helicopters that were used during the wars. These revealed the progressive development of airforce models during the war period.

6.3.2 After being treated to a military meal luncheon using military cutlery, the delegation then toured the majestic Main Cathedral of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation. This Cathedral, with its impressive and magnificent architectural designs is dedicated to the 75th Anniversary of the victory in the Great Patriotic War as well as the military victories of the Russian people in all wars. This Cathedral sits on two levels – lower level features painted murals of their victory and their outstanding Generals and it is also a venue for services held from time to time on military special services. The upper level which has a larger space is dedicated for use by a maximum of 5 000 military personnel when they celebrate special military events such as was the case when they celebrated 75th Anniversary of the Russian victory in the patriotic war. What also impressed the Zimbabwean Delegation was that the Cathedral is a venerated church in Russia whose domed conical spikes are enameled in pure gold and that the main Cathedral is the tallest in Russia.

6.3.3 The delegation was overally impressed by the preserved military hardware and weaponry which was a revered Russian heritage.

6.4 **Tour of the Central Museum of the Great Patriot War 1941 to 1945 and Memorial on Poklonnaya Hill:** On 29 October 2022, the delegation was taken to the Museum of the Great Patriotic War which is also known as the Victory Museum. The museum is located in Moscow at Poklonnaya Gora. It features interactive exhibits and memorials of the Eastern Front of World War II, known in Russia as the “Great Patriotic War.” In a magnificent display of artistry, the Museum recreated exhibits with a striking resemblance to scenes from the war. In commemoration of the heroes on the home front, the museum also features exhibits on the contribution to the victory by frontline workers, ordinary citizens,

scientists, health and cultural workers.

7.0 **Meeting with the Speaker of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation**

7.1 On 29 September 2022, the Federal Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation led by Hon. Speaker Matvienko hosted Hon. Speaker Mudenda and his Delegation consequent upon Hon. Matvienko's visit to Harare in June 2022. The Federation Council Speaker expressed her gratitude for the warm hospitality extended to her and her delegation during the visit. In the same vein, she expressed appreciation for the unflinching support of Russia- Zimbabwe strong bilateral relations demonstrated by His Excellency, the President, Cde. Dr. Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa, who had displayed a deep understanding of the historical perspective regarding the Russia military campaign in Ukraine. She informed the Delegation that as soon as she arrived from Harare, she briefed President Putin on her successful visit to Zimbabwe. Consequently, President Putin dispatched four delegations to Zimbabwe including a ten (10) member University Team from Russia who were tasked to implement specific agreements in their respective fields. As a sign of appreciation of Zimbabwe's strong bilateral relations, President Putin directed that eleven (11) tonnes of wheat be donated to Zimbabwe to alleviate the impact of sanctions which had negatively affected the wheat stocks in Zimbabwe. Hon. Matvienko further expressed the hope that His Excellency, President Mnangagwa, would accede to the Russian invitation for him to attend the Russia-Africa Summit scheduled for St. Petersburg next year.

7.1.2 Regarding the bilateral relations between the two legislatures of Russia and Zimbabwe, Hon. Matvienko strongly hoped that the two legislatures would continually collaborate in support of each other's positions at the international fora, particularly where the sovereignty and territorial integrity of their respective countries would be threatened. On that score, the Hon. Matvienko lauded the signing of the agreement between the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation and the National Assembly of the Parliament of Zimbabwe as a concrete testimony of cementing Parliamentary diplomacy between the two Assemblies. Relatedly, she looked forward to the signing of a Cooperation Agreement between the Russian Federal Council and the Zimbabwean Senate in the near future. In the same vein the Hon. Matvienko informed the delegation that

a Friendship Association had been formed between the two Senates as another way of strengthening the bilateral relations between the two legislatures. She hoped that a similar Friendship Association would soon be established between the National Assembly of Zimbabwe and the State Duma.

7.1.3 The Host Speaker appealed to the Zimbabwean Delegation that efforts should be made to ensure that the two legislatures promoted accelerated economic development between their respective countries, especially in the areas of mining, education, health services and energy development. The two legislatures were expected to enact laws that promoted the ease of doing business and expeditious financial business transactions in the context of fighting the illegal economic sanctions imposed by the United States of America and its allies. The Hon. Speaker Mudenda agreed totally with the suggestions of Hon. Matvienko on issues that she raised. However, the Hon. Speaker Mudenda decried laissez faire situation in which the signed Memoranda of Understanding and Agreements did not have time lined implementation matrix. So far, there are 18 signed Memoranda of Understanding/Agreements whose outcomes are yet to be realized. It was, therefore, incumbent on the two legislatures to exercise robust oversight in ensuring that the signed Memoranda of Understanding/Agreements were implemented expeditiously.

7.1.4 Hon. Matvienko also advised the Zimbabwe Delegation about the root cause of Russia's military campaign in Ukraine which hinged upon the coup that ushered in the current Ukraine administration which was supported by NATO countries and the United States of America thereby creating security concerns by the Russian Federation along its borders. In that regard, the Zimbabwe Delegation appreciated the detailed background on the Russian Federation military campaign in Ukraine. Accordingly, the meeting discussed the possibility of the Russia military campaign in Ukraine being raised as an emergency item at the Inter-Parliamentary Union in Rwanda. It was underscored that the Russian Parliamentary Delegation to the Inter-Parliamentary Union should exercise extensive diplomacy maneuvers to forestall that possibility. In doing so, the Russian Parliamentary Delegation should anchor its arguments that the founding fathers of the IPU, Cremer and Passy, advocated for the resolution of disputes through dialogue in terms of Article 2 of the United Nations Charter and International Law with the understanding that Russia has a fundamental right to protect its sovereignty and

territorial integrity in terms of article 51 of the UN Charter.

7.1.5 Hon. Matvienko requested the Hon. Speaker of Zimbabwe to pass on warm greetings to His Excellency, the President and the First Lady whom she admires as a leading champion in philanthropy targeting gender equality and the protection of women and girls in Zimbabwe. Hon. Matvienko informed the Zimbabwe delegation that the Zimbabwe First Lady had been invited to visit Russia in November 2022 where she would be expected to accept a donation on behalf of the Angel of Hope Foundation. She also asked the Zimbabwe delegation to relay her warm regards to Hon. Mabel Memory Chinomona, President of the Senate, as she appreciated the cordial meetings she had held with the Senate President in Harare and subsequently in St Petersburg. Hon. Matvienko was looking forward to Hon. Chinomona's expected visit to Russia in December 2022 during which visit the Cooperation Agreement between the two Senates would be signed.

8.0 **Recommendations**

8.1 The Bilateral Visit which culminated in the signing of the historic Cooperation Agreement between the National Assembly of Zimbabwe and the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation should now translate into tangible outputs for the mutual benefit of the people of Russia and Zimbabwe. To this end the strengthening of existing relations through the accelerated implementation of the Agreement is of paramount importance. The following activities may be undertaken for sustained relations:

1. Specialized Committee exchange visits in order to share views and best practices on parliamentary processes in specific economic sectors should be encouraged;
2. Concerted efforts by the two legislatures to ensure the implementation of Memoranda of Understanding and Agreements;
3. Rendering corroborative support at the international fora;
4. Participating at Conferences that further the cause of the two legislatures;
5. Parliament of Zimbabwe together with the Executive must strive to promote historical and cultural heritage of Zimbabwe which should be digitalized.
6. Domestic tourism is another area that Zimbabwe can learn from Russia as well

as how to package and brand the different tourist attractions to not only encourage foreign tourists but domestic tourists as well.

9.0 **Conclusion**

9.1 The Delegation extends its appreciation to the Parliament of Zimbabwe and Government for affording it the opportunity to undertake the high-level bilateral exchange visit. The Delegation, therefore, calls on Parliament to ensure sustained relations with the State Duma of Russia and the Federal Council anchored on mutual trust for the benefit of the people of Russia and Zimbabwe.