A ‘Global Political Agreement’ to institute a government of national unity was signed by the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in September 2008, however, the MDC was unable to reach agreement with President Mugabe’s ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) party on the distribution of ministries, as well as other issues. The agreement was wide-ranging in its scope and specific in the representation to be available to the respective parties. Article III, ‘Restoration of Economic Stability and Growth’ provides for the creation of a National Economic Council and commits the parties to give priority to the restoration of economic stability and growth in Zimbabwe. The Government will lead the process of developing and implementing an economic recovery strategy and plan. To that end, the parties are committed to working together on a full and comprehensive economic programme to resuscitate Zimbabwe's economy, which will urgently address the issues of production, food security, poverty and unemployment and the challenges of high inflation, interest rates and the exchange rate (“Agreement between the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-FP) and the two Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) formations, on resolving the challenges facing Zimbabwe” 2008, 15 September - Attachment 1).

Article XX, ‘Framework for a New Government’ describes cabinet responsibilities and the roles of the President, Prime Minister and Council of Ministers. Section 20.1.2 (g) stipulated that “The President and the Prime Minister will agree on the allocation of Ministries between them for the purpose of day-to-day supervision.” The composition of the Executive was specified as follows:

20.1.6 Composition of the Executive
(1) There shall be a President, which Office shall continue to be occupied by President Robert Gabriel Mugabe.
(2) There shall be two (2) Vice Presidents, who will be nominated by the President and/or Zanu-PF.
(3) There shall be a Prime Minister, which Office shall be occupied by Mr Morgan Tsvangirai.
(4) There shall be two (2) Deputy Prime Ministers, one (1) from MDC-T and one (1) from the MDC-M.

(5) There shall be thirty-one (31) Ministers, with fifteen (15) nominated by ZANU PF, thirteen (13) by MDC-T and three (3) by MDC-M. Of the 31 Ministers, three (3) one each per Party, may be appointed from outside the members of Parliament. The three (3) Ministers so appointed shall become members of the House of Assembly and shall have the right to sit, speak and debate in Parliament, but shall not be entitled to vote.

(6) There shall be fifteen (15) Deputy Ministers, with (eight) 8 nominated by ZANU PF, six (6) by MDC-T and one (1) by MDC-M.

(7) Ministers and Deputy Ministers may be relieved of their duties only after consultation among the leaders of all the political parties participating in the Inclusive Government (“Agreement between the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-FP) and the two Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) formations, on resolving the challenges facing Zimbabwe” 2008, 15 September - Attachment 1).

A meeting of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) comprising 15 nations, was held at the end of January 2009 at which Mr Morgan Tsvangirai, the leader of the Movement for Democratic Change, agreed to the formation of a transitional coalition government;

Opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai said his party determined that working within the government offered the best route to democracy and to ending Zimbabweans' suffering. But he expressed skepticism about sharing power with Mugabe, Zimbabwe's iron-fisted ruler for nearly 29 years.

"We are not saying that this is a solution to the Zimbabwe crisis. Instead, our participation signifies that we have chosen to continue the struggle for a democratic Zimbabwe in a new arena," Tsvangirai told reporters in Harare, the capital. He added, "Now is the time for us to put aside our political differences, to prioritize the welfare of the people."

Tsvangirai is to be sworn in as prime minister on Feb. 11 as part of a power-sharing pact, reached in September, that could provide an opening for the revival of Zimbabwe, a once-flourishing nation that is buckling under hyperinflation, hunger and a cholera epidemic.

But questions remain, key among them whether Mugabe -- whom the opposition says has betrayed the deal by claiming key ministries and imprisoning and torturing opposition activists -- will cooperate with or undermine the man who has been his political foe for a decade. Over the years, Tsvangirai has been beaten, imprisoned, charged with treason and denied travel documents by Mugabe's enforcers.

"Whether this government will become functional, given the distrust between the two parties, you can say the jury is still out," said Sydney Masamvu, a South Africa-based analyst for the International Crisis Group. "I do not think this inclusive government, with two centers of power, will do much in the short term."

Under the terms of the deal, which require the ruling party and Tsvangirai's Movement for Democratic Change to share control of the ministry that oversees police, Mugabe will retain his grip on most of the security forces he has long deployed to quell dissent. But one opposition official said the party believes its control of the finance, health and education ministries will allow it to quickly channel resources to the public (“Zimbabwe Opposition agrees to form Unity Government” 2009, Washington Post, 31 January, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/01/30/AR2009013000657.html - Accessed 11 February 2009 – Attachment 2).
The agreement would be for a transitional arrangement of up to two years when a new constitution and elections would be held. Mr Tsvangirai stated following a meeting of the MDC executive in Harare that

the national council had resolved “to come to be part of the inclusive government.” He said: “We met and we have decided to abide by the regional leaders’ resolution. We are committed to joining the government of national unity and hope that (Mr Mugabe's party) are going to treat us as equal partners.”

Spokesman Nelson Chamisa told a press conference that the agreement had been unanimous. “Contrary to reports that there are fissures in the party, there is nothing. There is unanimity.”

About 1,000 people had gathered in the street outside the building in central Harare to hear the result of the meeting, and when Mr Tsvangirai, speaking with a loud hailer from the back of a pickup truck, announced that the council had backed going into the proposed government, there was an explosive roar of approval (“Morgan Tsvangirai agrees to join Robert Mugabe's power-sharing government” 2009, The Times, 30 January, http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/africa/article5619887.ece - Accessed 11 February 2009 – Attachment 3).

BBC also reported on the meeting;

During the animated two-hour meeting at the party headquarters, insiders say the MDC leader's body language said it all.

He intended to force through the SADC mandate of taking part in a new government, getting sworn in, and addressing all outstanding issues from within, regardless of the distrust everyone had of Zanu-PF.

Insiders say there was a long, often tense, debate with the party leadership "expressing its worries that some of the main issues had not been addressed", and that "Mugabe was sinking and would take advantage of the MDC's goodwill to revive his party".

There was also a feeling that in spite of the biting economic crisis, and deepening humanitarian situation, Mr Mugabe was prepared to bring Zimbabwe down with him.

That he was going nowhere was the stark reality the MDC had to face, insiders said.


The MDC leader was criticised by many for agreeing to the terms of the arrangement, including MDC Secretary–General, Tendai Biti, subsequently appointed to the position of Finance Minister; particularly because the MDC failed to obtain any of the state security organisation portfolios:

More hopeful MDC voices say that in government, the momentum will swing their way. Some want more independent technocrats. They foresee an 18-month, transitional arrangement, producing a new constitution and independent electoral commission, then elections where the opposition would romp home. Yet the national unity government has no agreed time-limit. It could last for over four years, while the police, intelligence and armed forces stay under Mugabe-loyalists.
Tsvangirai's small consolation is that the deal has also split Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front. Its ambitious succession candidates, Vice-President Joyce Mujuru and ex-security chief Emmerson Mnangagwa, are furious that 85-year-old Mugabe has a new lease of life. 'With Tsvangirai's help, Mugabe could emerge as a freshly laundered dictator,' said a former party activist.

The MDC gets the Finance, Local Government, Education, Agriculture and Health ministries and shares Home Affairs. ZANU-PF keeps the rest, including Defence, Foreign Affairs, Lands, State Security, Higher Education and Mining. This is unlikely to trigger the hundreds of millions of foreign dollars needed to resurrect the economy. Along with most of the SADC, Russia and China have endorsed the deal (but will not offer much money). Like the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, most Western countries distrust a bargain that leaves Mugabe as President and his securocrats in place, alongside Reserve Bank Governor Gideon Gono.

Tsvangirai has so far done little to convince Western governments that the agreement reflects the majority's will. He entered the unity government without guarantees or even offers of international support. European Union and United States' sanctions on Mugabe and his allies will continue for another year, although some short-term funds might arrive from the African Development Bank or World Bank ("Power-sharing for bankrupt beginners" 2009, Africa Confidential, 6th February, http://www.africa-confidential.com/home - Accessed 11 February 2009 – Attachment 5).


Although the MDC failed to win control of home affairs, a key demand since it would have guaranteed control of the police force, it will share responsibility for running the ministry. And it will also take over the finance brief, where arguably its toughest and most outspoken leader, Tendai Biti, will have the job of negotiating support from international donors.

Finding a modus vivendi between parties whose relations have been marked by extreme animosity – several MDC activists remain detained by the Mugabe regime – will be a considerable challenge. But no harder than persuading international donors to lend money to a government in which Mr Mugabe is likely to play a powerful role.

The US on Wednesday said it would need to see changes on the ground before any lifting of sanctions, even with the MDC leader as prime minister.

However, Mr Tsvangirai made light of potential problems, arguing that the new arrangement was merely transitional, implying that he would work for fresh elections. “There can be no turning back. This is not a perfect agreement but it is still a way forward,” he told the crowd (“Tsvangirai promises a new start” 2009, Financial Times, 11 February,
On Wednesday 11th February, Mr Tsvangirai was formally sworn in:

"I will well and truly serve Zimbabwe in the office of prime minister," Tsvangirai said as he took his oath of office from Mugabe under a white tent on the lawns of the presidential mansion.

Former South African president Thabo Mbeki, who mediated in the power-sharing talks, attended the ceremony along with Mozambican President Armando Guebuza and Swazi King Mswati III.

The former trade union leader is all too aware of the concerns that he, like earlier Mugabe rivals, could be swallowed into the long-ruling Zanu-PF party without changing the course of a nation that is by any measure disintegrating.

"The sceptics must understand why we have done this and what is the best course of action to address the questions and challenges of transition in this political environment," Tsvangirai said on the eve of his swearing-in.

"We have made this decision and we made it without being forced. We want our colleagues in the country and outside the country to approach it from that perspective. It is our decision. Let history be the judge of this decision," he said.

South Africa brokered the unity deal, which was signed on September 15 but stalled amid protracted talks on how to divide Cabinet posts and share control of the security forces.

Those concerns were finally addressed when the parties agreed to name co-ministers to home affairs, which oversees the police, and to create a new National Security Council that will allow all parties control of the security forces.

But analysts question how such an arrangement can work with the 84-year-old Mugabe, who has ruled since independence in 1980 and who just recently declared that "Zimbabwe is mine".

"Tsvangirai's swearing-in symbolises a new era for the people of Zimbabwe," said Daniel Makina, a political analyst at the University of South Africa.

"Whether the inclusive government will be a success or not is another matter."

The challenges facing Zimbabwe would daunt even the most experienced of administrators.

More than half the population needs emergency food aid. Unemployment is at 94%. Only 20% of children go to school because teachers haven't been paid and exams not graded.

Public hospitals are closed, with doctors and nurses unpaid, exacerbating a health crisis in a nation where 1,3-million people have HIV and cholera has hit nearly 70 000 people since August, killing about 3400 ("New era for Zim as Tsvangirai sworn in as PM" 2009, Mail and Guardian, 12 February, http://www.mg.co.za/article/2009-02-11-new-era-for-zim-as-tsvangirai-sworn-in-pm - Accessed 12 February 2009 - Attachment 9).
In his inauguration speech, Mr Tsvangirai referred to the release from prison 19 years previously of former President Nelson Mandela; just as his release did not represent the conclusion of the South African ‘struggle for freedom’ it was an ‘historic step’ but it had ‘still not arrived. Only with the courageous effort and compromise by all parties was a peaceful transition finally possible.’ He referred, also, to the need to end ‘violent political polarization’, for the need to release the 30 imprisoned human rights activists and MDC members, for the need to implement the democratization agenda; to restore political freedoms and promote an independent media; to deal with the humanitarian and cholera crisis; and to stabilise the economy. He also announced that civil servants would be paid in foreign currency from the end of the month (Movement for Democratic Change 2009, “Inauguration Speech of the Prime Minister of Zimbabwe, Morgan Tsvangirai”, All Africa, 11 February, http://allafrica.com/stories/200902110660.html - Accessed 12 February 2009 - Attachment 10).

At the ceremony, Mr Mugabe told the audience that the agreement was a ‘victory for Zimbabwe’. However it was reported that the generals who have enforced Mr Mugabe’s rule ‘stayed away so that they would not have to salute the new Prime Minister and state-controlled television and radio failed to broadcast his inaugural speech’ (“Zimbabweans’ hope rekindled as new era dawns” 2009, The Australian [source: The Times], 13 February - Attachment 11).

Western international reaction to the agreement to implement the September 2008 agreement has been cautious. Britain’s Prime Minister Gordon Brown said Zimbabwe required a number of reforms:

Testifying to a Parliamentary committee in London on Thursday, Brown made it clear Morgan Tsvangirai's appointment as Prime Minister would not lead to an immediate change in relations with Zimbabwe, or open the way to large-scale aid to help rebuild the ravaged economy.

Tsvangirai was sworn in on Wednesday by Robert Mugabe following months of disagreements after the signing of the power-sharing deal in September last year.

Brown said he had told Tsvangirai in a telephone call on Tuesday, Britain did want to see humanitarian aid getting to people in need, such as those affected by the cholera outbreak. Brown has always been one of the fiercest critics of Mugabe, accusing him of destroying the economy and using militias to suppress opposition.

His foreign secretary David Milliband sounded fairly conciliatory when he heralded Tsvangirai's inauguration as a 'step forward', but voiced concern that Mugabe remained as President. Milliband added that the international community stood ready to offer additional aid to Zimbabwe but it all depended on the actions of the new government.

The Obama administration meanwhile extended its congratulations to Tsvangirai for becoming the country's Prime Minister, but said it is waiting to see evidence of true power-sharing and effective governance before offering additional development assistance, or easing its targeted sanctions against Mugabe and his key supporters.

Acting State Department spokesman Robert Wood said that the United States is reserving judgment on the new government. He said they need to see evidence of good governance and particularly 'real, true power-sharing on the part of Mugabe' before they were prepared to make any kind of commitment.
Economist Luke Zunga said the reasons why the western world remained sceptical was because nothing is on the ground yet to show there is change.


Australia would not lift sanctions against the Zimbabwean government immediately, according to a statement made by Foreign Minister Smith on 12th February:

Australia would continue to provide Zimbabwe with humanitarian assistance, but no consideration was being given to lifting sanctions.


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1. “Agreement between the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-FP) and the two Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) formations, on resolving the challenges facing Zimbabwe” 2008, 15 September. (CISNET - 16471)


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