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Her Excellency Ms Lindiwe Mabuza
High Commissioner for South Africa
South African High Commission
South Africa House
Trafalgar Square
London
WC2N 5DP

Your Excellency

I am, by profession, a Solicitor but now act as a Mediator and Arbitrator, accredited by the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators.

At the weekend, the BBC News website carried a report which I considered criticised President Mbeki for not criticising President Mugabe because, he said, his position as a Mediator did not permit him to comment.

I sent a comment to the Website but, although over 3,000 comments have been published, mine was not and I have only seen one (from Canada) suggesting that the Mediation process, and the Mediator, should be trusted.

I do not doubt that President Mbeki has the strength to retain his independence as a Mediator but I would like you, as the representative of your country in the United Kingdom, to be aware that he has at least some British support in that role. Accordingly, I set out below the text of my comment to the BBC:

“By saying that his that his role as mediator forbids him from openly commenting on the situation - save calling for a negotiated settlement - President Mbeki is following one of the first principles of mediation: to respect confidentiality.

And by treating the parties as equal, he is following another: to be neutral and not judgmental. Mediators are used to situations in which one party has much more power than the other or others. Any appearance of favouring one party is likely to cause the process to stall and, quite possibly, to break down completely.

Peter Greste's report acknowledges that President Mbeki is the one person who has direct access to Zanu-PF and that the UN Security Council resolution explicitly commended him for his efforts.

If we call for him to change his present approach, we show that we have learned nothing from the lessons of Northern Ireland and Iraq.”

Should you wish to do so, you have my permission to publish it, at your discretion, and I will be pleased to continue to lend my support to your President's present efforts.

Yours sincerely

David A Ellwood, FCI Arb
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Accredited Civil and Commercial Mediator