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**MESSAGE BY THE HONOURABLE MINISTER, LT. GEN. (RTD) DR. S.B. MOYO ON THE 40<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC OF ZIMBABWE AND THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION: 18 FEBRUARY 2021**

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Today marks the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the Republic of Zimbabwe and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), the predecessor state of the Russian Federation, on 18 February 1981.

The establishment of diplomatic relations between our two countries was a formalization of the bonds of friendship and solidarity that had been forged between our two peoples during Zimbabwe's liberation struggle, for the history of Zimbabwe's independence cannot be complete and fully comprehended without mentioning the critical role and sacrifice of the Russian People. Russia and its sister Republics in the USSR, provided moral, Diplomatic and material support for our liberation struggle. There is no gainsaying the fact that Russia was, indeed, a cradle, in all its forms, for our liberation fighters who were equipped by this great nation with the skills, tactics, sophistication and materials that were requisite in prosecuting the guerrilla warfare that eventually gave birth to a new Zimbabwe in April 1980. The debt of gratitude for that support will always be deeply etched in the hearts of the Zimbabwean people. It was therefore most befitting that the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics became one of the world's first nations to exchange Diplomatic Missions with the newly independent Republic of Zimbabwe exactly four decades to this date, signifying the culmination of an enduring relationship between our two countries.

Throughout the last four decades, the Russian Federation has continued to open its doors to Zimbabwe for cooperation. Over the years, the cooperation between our two countries has grown both in its



strength and scope. We have witnessed the expansion of our collaboration from an essentially political relationship into a robust, strategic and economic partnership for the mutual benefit of both our peoples. Thousands of Zimbabweans, from both civilian life and the uniformed services, have benefited, and continue to benefit, from Russian study and training programmes in various areas, including medicine, engineering, journalism, to mention but a few through the provision of scholarships for long and short-term study and training.

The ever-broadening and deepening cooperation between our two countries is underpinned by the Zimbabwe-Russia Intergovernmental Commission on Economic, Trade, Scientific and Technical Cooperation, which, since its inception has held three sessions, with the Fourth one, which was due to be held in 2020 being postponed owing to the unforeseen circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic.

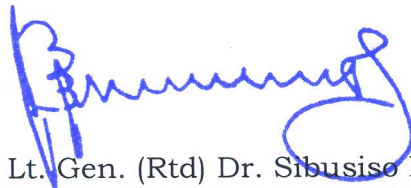
The pandemic, devastating as it has been to both our economies and peoples' lives, has however not weakened our two Governments' resolve to make progress in the implementation of our cooperation agenda. This resilience and endurance has been the hallmark of our decades-old cooperative partnership which in recent times has seen our two countries open new frontiers of cooperation in various sectors, including energy, science and technology development, education, and mining, the latter of which we have flagship projects that are on-stream in the fields of platinum and diamond extraction.

We have watched with such keen interest Russia's success in developing the SPUTNIK vaccine against COVID-19. This is thanks to the ingenuity and hardwork of Russian scientists. We offer our most sincere congratulations to the Russian people for this great achievement. The threat of this pandemic once again illustrates the need for multilateralism which has been endangered in the last few years. This danger should galvanize our countries and peoples to collaborate even more in order to combat the pandemic. The shocks from the pandemic underline the imperative to further strengthen our socio-economic systems for the sustenance of our peoples' livelihoods. True to our two countries' time-honoured relationship, whose longevity we are today celebrating, the Russian Federation has again been forthcoming in providing Zimbabwe with much needed material support to combat the spread of COVID-19 pandemic, even at a time when Russia itself has been terribly affected. This is the true hallmark of a

sincere friendship. For this, Zimbabweans are again most grateful.  
*Spasiba bolshoi!*

Beyond their natural boundaries, the Republic of Zimbabwe and the Russian Federation continue to enjoy each other's support at various fora, including the United Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement and continental and regional bodies, in pursuit of the two countries' shared vision of a just and peaceful world order, especially in these times of increasing threats to global peace and security.

Long may the bonds of friendship between the Republic of Zimbabwe and the Russian Federation continue to endure and thrive well beyond the auspicious celebrations of the 40th anniversary of the establishment of Diplomatic relations between our two countries. May these relations also flourish into the next 40 years and more!



Lt. Gen. (Rtd) Dr. Silibusiso B. Moyo

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