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Ref: SB:dd

11 November 2009

Robert G. Mugabe,  
President,  
Causeway,  
Harare  
Zimbabwe

Fax: + 263.4.70.38.58

**Re: Arrests of ZCTU President Lovemore Matombo**

Dear Mr. President,

On behalf of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU), which represents two million workers and strong supporters of democratic rights, I am writing to condemn in the strongest possible terms the arrests of ZCTU President Lovemore Matombo and staff members Michael Kandukutu and Percy Mciyo on the night of 8 November.

The ACTU has been informed by the International Trade Union Confederaion (ITUC), that the three were arrested last night in Victoria Falls, while Mr. Matombo was addressing members of the ZCTU Victoria Falls District. They were later transferred to Hwange police station.

The ZCTU President was on a tour of the country to meet ZCTU structures and the Victoria Falls meeting was the first stop on his tour.

Mr. Matombo, Michael Kandukutu and Percy Mciyo were clearly exercising legitimate trade union activity, which is protected under ILO Convention 87 on the right to freedom of association and the right to organise. The government of Zimbabwe has ratified this convention, and is under an obligation to refrain from any interference with trade union activities.

We have also been informed of the attack of a trade union leader's family on the night of 3<sup>rd</sup> November. Gertrude Hambira is the General Secretary of GAPWUS and a council member of the ZCTU. Although the origin of this attack is not clear, the government must ensure that trade unionists can operate in a climate free of fear.

We are especially alarmed at the unwarranted arrest of Mr. Matombo and his colleagues and the many recent incidents of trade union rights violations despite the ongoing ILO Commission of Inquiry into violations of fundamental workers rights. The continued repression shows that trade union rights violations are not limited to the past, but remain a pressing problem in Zimbabwe.

We wish to remind you that the ILO Constitution was used to reflect the very serious nature of violations in Zimbabwe, and the ACTU firmly believes that your Government now has the opportunity to use the process of the Commission to address the law and practice to achieve improvement in labour conditions in Zimbabwe.

The ACTU and our members join the ITUC to urge you to order the immediate release without charge of Lovemore Matombo, Michael Kandukutu and Percy Mcijo, to guarantee the safety and physical and psychological integrity of all ZCTU officials, staff members and of all other democracy activists.

We expect your government to take the necessary steps to respect trade unions and human rights. I await your reply.

Yours sincerely



Sharan Burrow  
PRESIDENT

Cc: *His Excellency Mr Stephen CHIKETA, Zimbabwe Ambassador to Australia*  
*Stephen Smith, Minister for Foreign Affairs*  
*ITUC T& HR Dept*