

UN development official urges greater international support for Zimbabwe

With a new administration in place and plans to hold free and fair general elections later this year, authorities in Zimbabwe are hoping to see greater international investment in their country, according to the top United Nations official there.

Bishow Parajuli, UN Resident Coordinator and Resident Representative for the UN Development Programme ([UNDP](#)), said now is the time to support the southern African nation.

“I think the international community should be very open, the UN should be very open, to engage and partner with – and support Zimbabwe – to come out of some of the major crises they have had in the last several years so they can stand on their own,” he told *UN News* during a recent visit to New York.

They are calling for a lot of investors to come in, private sector to come in, which is really fundamental, actually. Aid alone is not enough – *Bishow Parajuli (UNDP)*

Zimbabwe is emerging from the nearly 40-year rule of former President Robert Mugabe, who resigned in November.

His successor, Emmerson Mnangagwa, has pledged to build “a new Zimbabwe,” one that is not only openly courting foreign investment but also committed to upholding human rights.

“The Government has been very active in terms of promoting engagement and they have declared themselves as open for business, contrary to the past administration,” said Mr. Parajuli.

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International investment will help Zimbabwe to address numerous development challenges.



UNDP Zimbabwe/Sirak Gebrehiwot

The UN Country Team tour of UN supported resilience and community asset building projects in Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe. Mr Bishow Parajuli is front center.

Twenty-five UN entities are already operating in the country, supporting national efforts in areas such as stamping out HIV and AIDS, and driving down maternal mortality rates.

Last year, their 150 international staff and 800 local colleagues delivered more than \$400 million in projects and programmes.

Overall, they accounted for more than 60 per cent of official development assistance (ODA) administered in the country.

Mr. Parajuli explained that the relationship between the UN country team and Zimbabwe had always been “excellent” and now has now become stronger.

“For example, the UN system is supporting promotion of human rights,” he said.



UNDP Zimbabwe/Sirak Gebrehiwot

UNDP's Administrator Achim Steiner (2nd from left) and Bishow Parajuli (3rd from left) witnessed a 19-year-old register to vote for the first time using the new technology, Biometric Voter Registration, at the Mbare registration center in Harare, Zimbabwe.

"We are working in supporting strengthening of the Parliament, we are supporting in areas of peacebuilding, and we are also supporting in different areas of capacity building to the Electoral Commission to contribute to that process of free, fair and transparent elections."

The election is scheduled for July and the new Government has invited the European Union and other international observers to monitor the process: a first for the country.

UNDP chief Achim Steiner, travelled to Zimbabwe in March, marking the first time in years that a senior UN official has visited the country.

In discussions with the authorities, he discussed ways the international community could assist Zimbabwe with its economic recovery, as well as his agency's support for the electoral process.

Mr. Parajuli believes Zimbabwe is prepared to hold a credible vote.

"As far as we see it, there are some good signs because the new voter rolls are being developed, with 5.4 million in new voter registration," he said.

"There is a lot of engagement between political parties and the ruling faction; engagement between the Election Commission, civil society and others. The political parties themselves are getting together to agree on a code of conduct for holding peaceful elections. So, all these signs are

positive.”