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17 August 2006

Mr Felix Nyamupinga
Chargé d'Affaires
Embassy of the Republic of Zimbabwe
11 Cuilgoa Circuit
O'Malley ACT 2606

E-mail: Zimbabwe1@iimetro.com.au
Fax: 02 6290 1680

Re: Arrest of Mr Wellington Chibebe, General-Secretary of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU)

Dear Mr Nyamupinga,

I am writing on behalf of all Australian trade union members and supporters of democratic rights, to express to your government in the strongest possible terms, our alarm at the arrest on the evening of 14 August of Mr Wellington Chibebe. We understand he is being held in custody at the Waterfalls police station.

Mr Chibebe is known and respected among Australian trade unionists, having participated in the last congress of the ACTU in Melbourne and the International Labour Conference in Geneva. He has recently been democratically re-elected to his leadership position, and has been unjustly arrested and assaulted while driving with his wife back into Harare from visiting his family in the rural areas.

As in the case of arrests and beatings of unionists, women's activists, church people, students and human rights defenders, we reiterate our opposition to the repressive activities of the Mugabe government against its citizens. We offer our solidarity with all the working people of Zimbabwe facing not only repression, but poverty, homelessness, famine, HIV, hyper-inflation, and massive unemployment. This suffering could be alleviated if President Mugabe and the ruling party, ZANU-PF, would reinstate the rule of law, basic democratic rights, and allow free and fair elections.

We ask that you convey to your government in Harare, our deep concern about the arrest of Mr Chibebe and our demand that he be released immediately without charge, and that trade unionists in Zimbabwe will no longer face persecution for their activities in defending basic living standards, workers' rights and human rights.

Yours sincerely

Sharan Burrow
President

Cc: *Hon Alexander Downer, Minister for Foreign Affairs*
Kevin Rudd, ALP spokesperson for Foreign Affairs