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Opening Statement of the Honorable **Ed Royce (R-CA), Chairman**
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International
Organizations Hearing:
“Zimbabwe After Mugabe”
February 28, 2018

(As prepared for delivery)

Thank you Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Bass for holding this timely hearing. Thank you to our witnesses today, some who have travelled far to share their expertise.

After 37 years, the oppressive rule of Robert Mugabe is thankfully over. After decades of economic decline, violent oppression, and authoritarian rule, I hope the people of Zimbabwe will finally have a chance to choose their leader and shape the future of their country. This is the opportunity of a lifetime for democracy in Zimbabwe.

This subcommittee closely followed the Mugabe regime as it stripped away the promise and opportunity of Zimbabwe. I was a strong advocate for the Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act of 2001, which slapped travel and economic sanctions against individuals “responsible for the deliberate breakdown of the rule of law, politically motivated violence, and intimidation in Zimbabwe.”

Today, while there is opportunity for change, we must be clear-headed as we look at the prospects for democracy in Zimbabwe. Some members of the current government leadership were responsible for the oppressive and violent policies that characterized the Mugabe regime, including plundering the nation’s diamond wealth. Some were directly responsible for its worst abuses. The brutal crackdown after opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai won the first round of voting in 2008 highlighted the lengths to which the regime would go to maintain power. We remember Morgan Tsvangirai, recently deceased, for his unwavering struggle for democracy.

The July elections are quickly approaching. This will be an important test for the government, the opposition parties, and the people of Zimbabwe.

The people of Zimbabwe suffered for decades under Mugabe. This is their time. Elections must be credible, peaceful and transparent. The Government of Zimbabwe must take steps to combat corruption, protect freedoms of expression, end state-backed violence and intimidation, and address land reform and property rights issues. The U.S. should see meaningful progress towards these reforms before we revise our current policy – including sanctions. The U.S. would like to be a partner in these reform efforts. And it is through these reforms that more Zimbabweans could enjoy prosperity and the country could return to being the bread basket of Southern Africa.

I look forward to hearing your testimonies.