

AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

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Zimbabwe Summary 20 May 2026

The controversial Constitution Amendment Bill No. 3 (CAB3) moves closer to parliamentary debate after the completion of a 90-day public consultation process that has exposed deep divisions over the country's democratic future. Zimbabwe records a major milestone in its mineral beneficiation drive after Prospect Lithium Zimbabwe, owned by China's Zhejiang Huayou Cobalt, announced the country's first-ever export of lithium sulphate, a higher-value battery precursor material. Zimbabwe agrees to return 67 farms previously seized from foreign investors covered by bilateral investment protection agreements, as the country seeks to repair relations with Western countries and unlock long-blocked international financing.

Constitutional amendment forges ahead despite growing outcry

Zimbabwe's controversial **Constitution Amendment Bill No. 3 (CAB3)** is moving closer to parliamentary debate after the completion of a 90-day public consultation process that has exposed deep divisions over the country's democratic future. The ruling **ZANU-PF** party insists the amendments are necessary for political stability and governance continuity. However, opposition groups, lawyers, churches, and civil society organisations argue the proposed changes amount to a major restructuring of Zimbabwe's political system designed primarily to keep President **Emmerson Mnangagwa** (2017-present) in power until 2030.

The consultation window officially closed on 18 May, with parliament expected to compile a comprehensive report before the bill proceeds to debate in the **National Assembly**. State media [reported](#) that hundreds of thousands of submissions were received during the consultation period, reflecting intense national interest in the issue.

At the heart of CAB3 are proposals to extend the presidential term, parliamentary term, and local authority electoral cycle from five years to seven years. If adopted, the changes would allow Mnangagwa, who is currently expected to leave office in 2028 under Zimbabwe's existing constitutional limits, to remain in power until 2030. The bill also proposes ending direct presidential elections by transferring the election of the president to the Parliament sitting jointly with the **Senate**.

Supporters within ZANU-PF argue the amendments are intended to reduce the frequency of elections, which they say are costly, politically divisive, and disruptive to long-term economic planning. The government has linked the reforms to its **Vision 2030** development agenda, arguing that political continuity is necessary to implement economic reforms and maintain stability.

However, critics say the proposals would fundamentally alter Zimbabwe's democratic system by weakening public participation and concentrating more power in the executive. Legal experts warn that replacing direct presidential elections with parliamentary selection would remove one of the most important democratic rights citizens currently exercise. Others argue that lengthening electoral terms reduces political accountability by giving elected leaders longer periods in office without seeking a fresh mandate from voters.

The **Law Society of Zimbabwe (LSZ)** has emerged as one of the strongest institutional critics of the process. The body [argues](#) that the proposed term extension clauses are unconstitutional unless approved through a national referendum. According to legal experts, Section 328 of the Constitution prohibits amendments that benefit an incumbent office holder through changes to term limits unless the public directly approves them through a referendum.

The government has rejected those arguments. Attorney general **Virginia Mabhiza** [insists](#) that a referendum is not legally required because the amendments do not directly alter the protected constitutional provisions that explicitly trigger a referendum process. Notably, Mabhiza is [considered](#) a close ally of the president.

The **Roman Catholic Church** has also entered the debate in unusually strong terms. The **Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference** has [urged](#) Parliament to reject CAB3 entirely, warning that the proposed changes threaten democratic safeguards, institutional independence, and constitutional accountability. The bishops argued that the Constitution is more than a political document and should not be amended to serve short-term political interests.

The consultation process itself has also attracted criticism. Opposition groups and civic organisations reported intimidation, suppression of dissenting voices, and irregularities during public hearings held across the country. Some observers alleged that ruling party supporters dominated meetings while critics of the bill faced harassment and exclusion.

Beyond extending Mnangagwa's tenure, the CAB3 could have far-reaching implications for Zimbabwe's governance system. By extending electoral cycles and shifting presidential elections away from direct public voting, the amendments could strengthen executive dominance while weakening checks and balances.

Despite the growing opposition, the bill's passage appears increasingly likely. Zanu-PF commands the two-thirds parliamentary majority required to amend the Constitution, meaning the upcoming parliamentary debate may ultimately serve as a procedural formality rather than a genuine obstacle to the proposed reforms.

ZANU-PF initially failed to garner a two-thirds majority in the August 2023 general election, but it now holds 190 of the 280 seats in the National Assembly, more than the 187 seats required to hold a two-thirds majority, following six parliamentary by-elections held in February 2024, which ZANU-PF won. A man, who the main opposition, **Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC)**, described as an imposter, forced the recall of some of CCC's MPs, triggering the by-elections.

Zimbabwe ships first lithium sulphate in beneficiation push

Zimbabwe has recorded a major milestone in its mineral beneficiation drive after **Prospect Lithium Zimbabwe**, owned by China's **Zhejiang Huayou Cobalt**, announced the country's first-ever export of lithium sulphate, a higher-value battery precursor produced at Prospect Lithium's **Arcadia** operations near Harare. Both government and industry have hailed the development as a breakthrough in Zimbabwe's efforts to move beyond raw mineral exports toward value-added industrial production.

The inaugural [shipment](#) was produced at the company's \$400m processing plant at the Arcadia mine and is reported to be the first lithium salt export not only from Zimbabwe but across Africa. Lithium sulphate is a more refined product used in the manufacturing of battery chemicals, particularly in the electric vehicle and energy storage industries. Lithium miners in Zimbabwe, who are mostly from China, have been exporting unrefined concentrates to China.

The government has framed the development as evidence that its beneficiation policy is beginning to yield results. Authorities have for several years argued that Zimbabwe, which

possesses some of the world's largest hard-rock lithium deposits, should derive more value from its mineral wealth by processing minerals locally before export.

That policy direction intensified in February when the government temporarily [suspended](#) exports of lithium concentrates. Officials said the measure was aimed at accelerating the transition toward higher-value products and compelling mining companies to invest in local processing infrastructure (see *ARC Briefing Zimbabwe Mar 2026*). The suspension also followed longstanding concerns about under-declaration of minerals, limited downstream industrial activity, and the loss of potential export earnings through the export of low-value concentrates.

However, the export restrictions raised concerns among mining companies over disruptions to cash flows and operational sustainability. In response, the government later introduced a quota-based system allowing limited exports to resume while companies upgrade their beneficiation capacity. Under the arrangement, producers are permitted to export controlled quantities of concentrates as they invest in processing plants and chemical conversion facilities. The quota system is intended to strike a balance between maintaining investor confidence and advancing Zimbabwe's industrialisation agenda.

Several major lithium companies operating in Zimbabwe were affected by the export suspension. These include Prospect Lithium Zimbabwe and China's **Sinomine Resource Group**, which acquired and now operates **Bikita Minerals**. Other key players include China-based **Chengxin Lithium Group**, which owns the **Sabi Star** lithium project.

Some producers have now been allowed to resume exports under the new quota regime. Bikita Minerals recently [confirmed](#) the resumption of lithium exports after securing government approval. The company indicated that the move would help sustain operations while work continues to expand local processing capacity.

Zimbabwe's push toward beneficiation comes at a time of rising global demand for battery minerals driven by the transition to electric vehicles and renewable energy technologies. Lithium has become one of the world's most strategically important minerals, with countries increasingly seeking secure supply chains for battery production.

For Zimbabwe, the successful export of lithium sulphate is being viewed as a significant shift from being merely a supplier of raw minerals to becoming a participant in higher-value segments of the global battery industry. Government officials argue that local processing can increase export revenues, create skilled jobs, and stimulate industrial growth.

However, significant challenges remain; developing a competitive battery minerals industry will require sustained investment in energy infrastructure, transport logistics, water supply, and industrial inputs. Zimbabwe also faces competition from established processing hubs in countries with stronger manufacturing hubs and closer access to major global markets.

Zimbabwe returns seized farms in bid to mend ties with West

Zimbabwe has [agreed](#) to return 67 farms previously seized from foreign investors covered by bilateral investment protection agreements, marking a potentially significant shift in its long-running effort to repair relations with **Western** countries and unlock long-blocked international financing.

The farms are linked to investors from **Germany**, the **Netherlands**, **Denmark**, and **Switzerland**, with which Zimbabwe has **Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreements (BIPPA)**. BIPPA's guarantee protections such as fair compensation in cases of expropriation and access to international arbitration. The investors [claimed](#) in international arbitrations that these protections were severely undermined during Zimbabwe's controversial land reform programme in the early 2000s.

The dispute dates back to the so-called ‘fast-track land reform’ programme launched around 2000 under former president **Robert Mugabe** (1987-2017). The policy sought to redistribute large-scale commercial farms owned mostly by white Zimbabweans and foreign investors to landless black citizens, correcting colonial-era land imbalances. However, the process was widely criticised for violent seizures, lack of compensation for improvements on the land, and disregard for existing bilateral investment protections.

A major turning point came after Mnangagwa took office in 2017, pledging to re-engage with international lenders and restore investor confidence. In 2020, his government [agreed](#) to a landmark \$3.5 billion compensation framework with about 4,000 displaced white commercial farmers, covering improvements made on seized land. However, implementation has been slow, with Zimbabwe’s fiscal constraints limiting actual cash payouts and leaving the agreement largely symbolic in practice.

The new move to return 67 farms appears to be part of a broader diplomatic push aimed at demonstrating good faith to international partners. It comes at a time when Zimbabwe is actively seeking debt restructuring and re-entry into global capital markets. The **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** earlier this year [initiated](#) a **Staff Monitored Programme (SMP)** with Zimbabwe, a key step often used to assess whether a country is ready for more formal financial assistance and broader reforms (*see ARC Briefing Zimbabwe Feb 2026*).

It also comes at a time when **United States (US)** lawmakers are considering repealing the sanctions against the country under the **Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act (ZDERA)**, first enacted in 2001 and amended in 2018. The [proposed](#) repeal would require Zimbabwe to meet strict conditions, particularly around compensation for farmers dispossessed during land reform.

The planned return of the 67 farms represents an important diplomatic gesture in Zimbabwe’s ongoing attempt to reset relations with the West. However, meaningful restoration of trust will likely depend on deeper reforms, particularly around human rights and electoral laws.

Planner

Jun 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe) Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ)** (central bank) **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)** decision

Jul 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** 2026 national budget midterm review

28 May 2027 **(South Africa)** Expiry of special residence permits for Zimbabweans living in South Africa

Chronology

16 May 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe) Newsday**. **Bikita Minerals**, a subsidiary of **China’s Sinomine Resource Group**, resumes lithium concentrate exports after securing an export licence from the mines and mining development ministry under the country’s new lithium export framework;

15 May 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe) Newsday**. Locally listed beverage maker, **Delta Corporation Limited**, reports revenue rose 35% to surpass the \$1 billion mark in the financial year ending 31 March 2026, with the company setting aside \$120m in capital expenditure to expand capacity amid rising demand;

13 May 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe) Newswire**. Two **Victoria Falls** hotel operators win a combined \$2.47m insurance payout after the high court ruled that insurer, **Zimnat**, wrongly refused to honour their **Covid-19** business interruption claims;

14 May 2026, **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Al Jazeera*. Information minister, **Zhemu Soda**, and government spokesperson **Nick Mangwana** report that predatory recruitment networks are trafficking Zimbabweans into **Russia's** war against **Ukraine**, prompting urgent pleas for government intervention to repatriate survivors and stop the exploitation;

12 May 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Zimlive*. State-owned miner, **Mutapa Gold Resources**, launches a \$75m local debt syndication drive to finance an aggressive expansion aimed at doubling gold production by 2028, as soaring bullion prices helped propel profits to \$138m;

11 May 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Bloomberg*. **Ernest Denhere**, deputy chief investment officer at state-owned sovereign wealth fund, **Mutapa Investment Fund Ltd**, says the company needs \$250m to expand its gold mining operations across the country;

11 May 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Zimbabwe Mail*. President **Emmerson Mnangagwa** appoints retired General **Philip Valerio Sibanda**, who retired from the **Zimbabwe Defence Forces (ZDF)** in November 2025, into the ruling **ZANU-PF** politburo, the party's powerful administrative organ responsible for implementing decisions of the central committee between congresses;

10 May 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *The Star*. Zimbabwe and **Equatorial Guinea** hold their inaugural joint commission meeting to strengthen economic and diplomatic cooperation across sectors like trade, mining and agriculture;

8 May 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Zimbabwe Mail*. Zimbabwe moves closer to a potentially historic energy breakthrough after **Australia's Invictus Energy** begins preparations for a drilling campaign in the second half of the year at the high-impact **Musuma-1** exploration well in the **Cabora Bassa Basin**;

7 May 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *New Zimbabwe*. Head of the **European Union (EU)** delegation to Zimbabwe, **Katrin Hagemann**, notes that the EU has pledged €7.8m (\$8.4m) to revitalise Zimbabwe's horticulture sector;

7 May 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Reuters*. Zimbabwe and other African countries including **Kenya, Malawi** and **Lesotho** have warned migrants in **South Africa** to be cautious and remain indoors due to attacks targeting foreigners, as **Ghana** lobbies the **African Union** regional bloc for action;

5 May 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Bloomberg*. Energy and power development minister, **July Moyo**, says Zimbabwe has begun trials of blending ethanol and diesel to offset rising costs caused by conflict in the **Middle East**, with tests being carried out by the government in partnership with privately owned entity **Green Fuel Ltd**;

5 May 2026 **Bulawayo (Zimbabwe)** *Zimbabwe Mail*. The government directs that the findings of the justice **Tendai Uchena**-led commission of inquiry into the sale of state land in urban areas be formally published and made publicly accessible;

4 May 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *New Zimbabwe*. **National Travel and Tourism Office (NTTO)** reports that **African** travel to the **United States (US)** has experienced a significant downturn, with Zimbabwe among the nations seeing a notable decrease in visitor numbers due to more restrictive visa processes;

4 May 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Newsday*. The **World Bank Group** has appointed **Firas Raad** as division director for **Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia** and Zimbabwe, effective 1 May, replacing **Nathan Belete**, who moves to the post of regional programs director for Africa;

29 Apr 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Newsday*. State-owned gold mining firm, **Mutapa Gold Resources (MGR)**, announces a sudden leadership transition following the resignation of its

chief executive officer, **Trevor Barnard**, with the company's chief finance officer, **Patrick Maseva-Shayawabaya**, taking over as CEO;

28 Apr 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *The Herald*. Zimbabwe's local currency inflation remained in single digits for the fourth consecutive month in April 2026, rising by 0.4% to 4.8%, despite escalating conflict in the **Middle East**;

24 Apr 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *The Herald*. **Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (Zimra)** sets 30 May, as the deadline for taxpayers to voluntarily disclose any undeclared income or outstanding tax obligations for the 2025 year of assessment under its **Voluntary Disclosure Programme**;

24 Apr 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *The Herald*. Mines and mining development minister, **Polite Kambamura**, issues a warning to individuals acting as proxies in the sale of mining claims, saying the government will soon move in with policy measures to restore order and protect national mineral resources;

23 Apr 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *AFDB*. **African Development Bank** approves a \$25m grant for the **Agricultural Climate Resilience and Vulnerability Reduction Project** to bolster climate resilience and food security for 92,500 smallholder farmers in the drought-prone **Masvingo** and **Matabeleland South** provinces;

21 Apr 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *New Zimbabwe*. Zimbabwean businessman **Wicknell Chivayo** withdraws his controversial \$3.6m donation to Zimbabwean legislators following a sharp backlash from ruling **ZANU-PF**;

21 Apr 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Newswire*. **Liquid Intelligent Technologies**, the parent of **Liquid Zimbabwe**, with operations spanning 31 African countries, retires its \$620m five-year bond ahead of its September maturity date, before issuing a new five-year bond worth \$300m;

21 Apr 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *The Herald*. Australia-based **Invictus Energy Ltd** raises \$10m through a strongly supported placement, positioning the company to accelerate **oil** and **gas** exploration at its 80 % -owned **Cabora Bassa Project** in northern Zimbabwe;

20 Apr 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Newswire*. Zimbabwe's sovereign wealth fund, **Mutapa Investment Fund (MIF)**, is betting on its mining portfolio to unlock fresh capital, with plans to raise \$75m from local banks and a further \$400m through a commodity-backed offtake facility;

20 Apr 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Bloomberg*. **Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe** (central bank) governor, **John Mushayavanhu**, says the country's currency is significantly undervalued, arguing that its true value is closer to half its current market price when measured against foreign reserves and **gold** backing;

17 Apr 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *The Herald*. Zimbabwe's gold deliveries for the first quarter of 2026 hit 9.31 tonnes, representing an 8.3% increase compared to the 8.59 tonnes recorded during the same period in 2025;

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