

## UK's Brown: Zimbabwe, Iran Must Prove Progress

Written by Rudi Prinsloo

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By David Stringer

Britain will not build better relations with Zimbabwe or Iran until both nations prove they are addressing international concerns about their affairs, Prime Minister Gordon Brown told lawmakers on Thursday.

Brown told a House of Commons committee that he retains deep reservations over President Robert Mugabe's role in Zimbabwe, despite Morgan Tsvangirai's formal appointment as prime minister.

Addressing a committee of 30 senior legislators, Brown also said Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad should respond to President Barack Obama's offer of new dialogue by abandoning his pursuit of nuclear weapons.

Mugabe swore Tsvangirai into office as prime minister on Wednesday, finally loosening his nearly three-decade grip on power.

Brown said he had spoken with Tsvangirai on Tuesday about the country's cholera epidemic, but had warned him that Britain will continue to rank among Zimbabwe's sharpest critics until conditions there improve.

"I said to him that obviously we would want to see humanitarian aid getting to people who are in a distressed position that, for example, the terrible cholera outbreak has caused," Brown told the House of Commons liaison committee.

"I also said to him that until the government of Zimbabwe can convince us that there were going to be free and fair elections, and at the same time that there was going to be the removal of repressive legislation -including the release of political prisoners - we could not treat Zimbabwe as if it was an ordinary country," he said.

Britain has previously pledged 3 million pounds (\$4.4 million) and set aside a further 7 million (\$10.25 million) in relief aid for Zimbabwe to provide medicine, fund basic health services and help prevent more cholera outbreaks.

Brown has accused Mugabe of failing to protect Zimbabwe's people and repeatedly called for him to stand down.

"These are the indicators of change that we will be looking for and I fear that President Mugabe will still stand in the way of these changes," Brown told the panel, which meets twice a year to question the prime minister.

Brown urged Ahmadinejad to take up Obama's offer of a changed relationship with Iran.

The British leader said that Ahmadinejad's statement that he welcome's Obama's offer would be

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meaningless, unless Iran agreed to meet an international call for it to suspend its uranium enrichment program.

Iran says it is seeking to develop a civilian nuclear program. The U.S. and allies believe Tehran is attempting to develop nuclear weapons.

"The sooner Iran can make a statement that it is willing to abide by the concerns of the international community, the sooner we can build a partnership with Iran," Brown said.