By Eshrat Mardi

**We are happy to have Iran as a strategic partner: Zimbabwean ambassador**

1. [Politics](https://www.tehrantimes.com/service/politics)

September 24, 2023 - 22:12

**Kupemba says there is “political will” to implement all projects between Harare and Tehran**



TEHRAN - The Zimbabwean ambassador to Tehran tells the Tehran Times that his country is happy that it has established a “strategic” partnership with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Bright Kupemba says Zimbabwe and Iran are working together to implement joint programs in the health and pharmaceutical sector, agriculture, mining, energy, tourism, science, and technology, and “we are happy to have Iran as a strategic partner in this regard.”

Following is the text of the exclusive interview with Ambassador Kupemba:

**Q: Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi recently visited Zimbabwe. Could you brief us on the results of this visit?**

A: Thank you very much for awarding me this wonderful opportunity to share a point or two on the evolving bilateral relations between Zimbabwe and Iran, particularly on the impact of the recent State Visit to Zimbabwe by His Excellency, Ayatollah Seyed Ebrahim Raisi, the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on 13 July 2023. This was, at all levels, a major milestone that went a long way in strengthening the already existing strong relations between Zimbabwe and Iran.

***“Zimbabwe and Iran have been under illegal and unilateral sanctions, and this brings us together in our quest to deal with and neutralize the negative effects of the nefarious machinations of our detractors on our common developmental agenda.”***The visit was a culmination of other significant bilateral engagements and events that have taken place between our two countries in the recent past, including the 9th Session of Zimbabwe-Iran Joint Permanent Commission for Cooperation [JPCC] which was held here in Tehran, in February 2023. Included in this matrix are various ministerial exchanges and private sector interactions, that have been going on between our two peoples over time. So President Raisi’s visit to Zimbabwe is a consequence of several events before his visit and should be taken as part of the broader strategic bilateral cooperation agenda between Zimbabwe and Iran.

Coming to your question, during their engagement in New York in September 2022, on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, the two principals agreed to deepen cooperation between the two countries and directed that their administrations should develop programs that will strengthen our bilateral cooperation. The result of this executive directive was the consummation of the 9th Session of the Zimbabwe Iran JPCC, which was held in Tehran in February 2023, as l have mentioned earlier. Several areas of cooperation were identified, discussed and agreed to by the two sides. To avoid the business-as-usual approach and inertia that characterize the implementation of most bilateral cooperation agreements the world over, President Raisi’s visit, at the invitation of His counterpart, His Excellency, President Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa, was meant to demonstrate the level of political will and commitment, at the highest levels of both countries, on the need to implement, urgently, all agreed projects and programs between our two countries. That political will and commitment to achieve the desired results for the benefit of our people was necessary, hence the significance of the visit to Harare on deepening bilateral cooperation between the two sides.

**Q: During the trip, Zimbabwe and Iran signed 12 cooperation documents. Is there any mechanism to follow up on the implementation of these documents?**

A: Well, this was the highest number of memoranda of understanding that were signed during the trip to the three African countries during President Raisi’s sojourn to the continent. We are very proud of this development because it demonstrates the strong bond of friendship that exists between our two countries over the years and the appetite for connection and cooperation between our peoples.

***“President Mnangagwa’s mantra is that Zimbabwe shall be ‘a friend to all and an enemy to none’. So in that regard, the sky is the limit.”***Indeed, twelve documents were signed in the presence of the principals of both countries. The significance of the signing ceremony in Harare implies that the agreements carry the blessings of the highest levels of government and therefore have the strength of executive orders, and should be promptly implemented as directed.

The Zimbabwe – Iran JPCC is another level of oversight that will also be utilized to ensure that all agreed programs and projects between our two countries are implemented. The JPCC has provisions for bi-annual review mechanisms, that allow for the evaluation of progress in the implementation of the agreements. The next review is due to be held in Tehran, this September 2023.

This is a platform that identifies all bottlenecks faced by operatives during the implementation phase of the agreed programs and facilitates the resolution of any challenges thereof. Those who are responsible for the implementation of the agreed programs are compelled to submit their implementation plans and progress reports to the JPCC. The process is meant to ascertain the achievement of the desired results for our people.

I was happy with the assurances I was given by parliamentarians in Iran, that the Majlis will chip in and assist both sides to achieve the results envisaged. This was said during my recent engagements with the Iranian Parliament soon after the visit. We are encouraged that the Iranian Parliament has taken an interest in what was agreed and is keen to see tangible results from President Raisi’s visit. As you know legislative bodies in most countries, including Zimbabwe and Iran, have a key oversight function that compels the executive to deliver on promises made to the nation. We intend to also utilize this parliamentary function on both sides, to ensure that projects agreed to are implemented.

Therefore, there are several layers of enforcement that we intend to use to ensure accountability and that we achieve what was agreed to during the recent visit. I can report that already several milestones have so far been achieved in this regard and we are pleased with the progress being made. Our people are watching and we intend to deliver on the promises made by our principals.

**Q: In your opinion, what is the most suitable area of cooperation between Zimbabwe and Iran?**

A: We don’t limit ourselves to only one area, as you may be aware, bilateral cooperation between Zimbabwe and Iran is anchored on historical bonds of friendship and cooperation that straddles both shared political and economic interests between the two countries. Both countries have been under illegal and unilateral sanctions for many years, and this brings us together in our quest to deal with and neutralize the negative effects of the nefarious machinations of our detractors on our common developmental agenda. In this regard, when Zimbabwe supports Iran or vice versa, in various multilateral fora under the United Nations and elsewhere, the synchronization of our positions is informed by these historic bonds. We have been friends for a long time. For your own information, Zimbabwean people are forever grateful for the material and moral support of the Iranian people during our struggle for independence from colonial rule in the 70s. That is the foundation which forged the basis of our friendship.

Regarding the economic side of things, the two countries have anchored cooperation on the shared desire for the betterment of the livelihoods of our people.  There are many areas of cooperation that the two countries have agreed to focus on as demonstrated by the recent twelve agreements on cooperation signed in Harare, and others that came earlier. To mention but a few, Zimbabwe and Iran are working together to implement joint programs in the health and pharmaceutical sector, as well and others such as agriculture, mining, energy, tourism, skills and manpower development, science and technology development, and cultural exchanges. All of these, pivot the desired enhancement of bilateral trade and investments between the two countries which are poised to cement our people-to-people connections. Significantly, a lot is going on between our two countries and we are happy to have Iran as a strategic partner in this regard.

**Q: How do you see the prospect for stronger cooperation between Zimbabwe and Iran under Raisi’s presidency?**

A: It goes without saying that the familial or brotherly friendship, existing between President Mnangagwa and President Raisi, is the centerpiece that will inspire the deepening of our bilateral relations with Iran. Together with the existence of historic bonds and mutual interests between our two countries, in relation to both the shared bilateral and multilateral objectives, we can only see an upward trajectory in the deepening of bilateral relations between the two countries under the capable leadership of both Presidents.
President Raisi’s affinity to the Zimbabwean people, which was demonstrated during his recent visit to Zimbabwe, inspires confidence in us that a lot can be achieved under his transformational leadership, which has emphasized the development of stronger cooperation between Iran, its neighbors, the Global South, including African countries like Zimbabwe, and the rest of the world. This dovetails perfectly with President Mnangagwa’s vision for Zimbabwe, which is also anchored on similar objectives. President Mnangagwa’s mantra is that Zimbabwe shall be “a friend to all and an enemy to none”. So in that regard, the sky is the limit.