

Rebranding Zimbabwe

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Zimbabwe's new Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai is facing the battle of a lifetime - trying to turnaround Zimbabwe's battered image to lure critical foreign investment and increase tourist traffic.

"We have to rebrand the country," Tsvangirai said to an audience of business executives in Harare soon after his inauguration. "We have been seriously damaged. We want to see people coming rather than being evacuated from Zimbabwe."

But even as he spoke about rebranding the country, his party's treasurer and deputy Agriculture Minister-designate, Roy Bennet, and several political activists, remained incarcerated, and a new wave of farm invasions threatened to trigger fresh strife in the crisis-torn country.

While the ailing economy and poor infrastructure concern visitors and investors alike, it is the absence of the rule of law, disrespect for property and human rights, and the surge in crime that has ruined brand Zimbabwe.

In an address to business in the small town of Gweru, Tsvangirai mocked travel alerts mainly from the West: "We are not at war, and therefore there can be no reason for the country to continue to be considered an unsafe (tourist) destination." This, many believe, appeared to suggest his participation in the inclusive government was enough to convince donors and financiers to start knocking at his door.

Tsvangirai has to push through political and economic reforms to win back the support of the international community and rebuild the country.

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