

Uganda is monitoring Mugabe-Zimbabwe events – Kutesa

By David Lumu and Agencies

Uganda is monitoring closely the situation in Zimbabwe as political events continue to unfold in the southern African country, foreign affairs officials have said.

The foreign affairs minister, Sam Kutesa, last evening told *New Vision* that the Government was watching the political events in Zimbabwe and was giving the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) and the African Union (AU) time to come up with a solution before it could issue a statement. However, Kutesa, who is in

Washington DC on official duty, said: "AU does not allow coups, but as of now, let us wait for SADC and see how it deals with the situation."

UN secretary general Antonio Guterres called on all sides in Zimbabwe to show "restraint".

Guterres is monitoring the situation and "appeals for calm, non-violence and restraint," said UN spokesman Farhan Haq.

The UN chief said SADC was making efforts to end the crisis.

South Africa urged Zimbabwe to resist any "unconstitutional changes" of government and said it was

sending envoys to Harare on behalf of the SADC bloc of southern African nations to help resolve the impasse.

President Jacob Zuma, one of Mugabe's closest allies, said he had spoken to the veteran leader by telephone.

"Mugabe indicated that he was confined to his home, but said he was fine," the South African government said in a statement.

Alpha Conde, Guinea's president, said the AU condemned the actions of top brass in the southern African nation as "clearly soldiers trying to take power by force".

The generals' actions pose a major challenge to 95-year-

old Mugabe, who has ruled Zimbabwe since independence from Britain in 1980.

The US embassy warned its citizens in the country to "shelter in place" due to "ongoing political uncertainty".

Britain expressed cautious optimism after the military took control of Zimbabwe, but warned against any transition "from one unelected tyrant to the next".

"The situation is still fluid, and we would urge restraint on all sides because we want to see and we would call for an avoidance of violence," Prime Minister Theresa May told MPs.

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson urged caution in predicting the future of Mugabe.

May said her primary concern was for the safety of about 20,000 British nationals who live in Zimbabwe.

The EU called for a "peaceful resolution" to the crisis.

"It is a matter of concern for the EU," European Commission spokeswoman Catherine Ray said.

"We are following very closely what is happening on the ground, underlining that the fundamental rights for the citizens need to be respected and the constitutional order and democratic governance to

be upheld."

On Harare's streets, many expressed amazement and delight yesterday that Mugabe's long reign may be coming to a close, but people also admitted the future looked unstable.

"We are happy with what has been done," Keresenzia Moyo, 65, a housewife, told AFP.

"We needed change. Our situation has been pathetic. The economy has been in the doldrums for a very long time."

Precious Shumba, director of Harare Residents Trust action group, said Zimbabwe was entering "a new phase".