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## **Mugabe Not Wanted in France**

By Itayi Garande

PARIS, France — President Chirac has bowed to pressure from Britain and blocked an attempt by President Mugabe of Zimbabwe to break his diplomatic isolation by attending a Franco-African summit on the French Riviera this week.

After intense lobbying from London, the French authorities told President Mugabe that he would not be welcome in Cannes for the three-day meeting between President Chirac and African heads of states, which begins today.

President Chirac was widely criticised for ignoring European Union sanctions and inviting President Mugabe when the summit was held in Paris in 2003.

Other African leaders had threatened to boycott the summit in support of President Mugabe. But the French authorities were confident that the boycott would fail to materialise.

The 24th Summit traditionally between African Heads of State and the French leader will be held from 15-16 February in Cannes, Southern France, under the theme 'Africa and world equilibrium'. The summit is the last of the current French legislature and will end with the upcoming April 22 presidential elections in that country.

Issues to be discussed at the Summit include the position and weight of Africa in global affairs, Africa and worldwide communication and the issue of raw materials.

The summit will take place with three thematic commissions.

The first of these commissions will focus on raw materials, their commercialization and their cost, and will feature France's Minister of the Economy and Finances and Burkina Faso President Blaise Compaoré.

The second thematic commission will analyze "The place and importance of Africa in the world," particularly in terms of south-south economic partnerships. This commission will include the French Minister of Foreign Affairs and is expected to be directed by South African President Thabo Mbeki.

The third commission, "Africa and the press," will analyze the Western press's view of the continent, as well as freedom of expression. This commission will be led by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and will include France's Minister of Cooperation.

Back in 2003 this summit attracted a chorus of protests from traditional opponents of the government in Harare. This year there has been as many protests as when the last Summit was staged. Philip Jennings, the general secretary of UNI Global Union—an

international labour movement—wrote to President Chirac saying: "Inviting Mr Mugabe or any other representative from the Zimbabwean government will give the sign to the world that France condones the oppressive regime in Zimbabwe."

Other African Heads of States, excluding Mugabe, start arriving in France today.

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