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European, US Firms Boycott Zimbabwe Trade Fair

BULAWAYO — European and American firms are for the sixth year running boycotting the Zimbabwe International Trade Fair (ZITF), the southern African nation's premier business event which begins in two month's time.

ZITF board chairman Nhlanhla Masuku told news website ZimOnline at the weekend that no participants from Europe or the Americas were lined up for the trade showcase that begins on 21 April.

"There are no Western companies coming for the ZITF as a result of the economic sanctions their countries imposed on Zimbabwe.

"And even if they were to come they would not be allowed by their countries to do bank transfers and other trade issues with some Zimbabwean companies," said Masuku.

The trade fair will be held under the theme, "Zimbabwe brands, Africa brands and Global brands."

Western countries have since 2001 shunned Zimbabwe accusing President Robert Mugabe of violating human rights and failing to uphold democracy and the rule of law.

Mugabe, who denies the charge, has in turn responded by pursuing a "Look East" policy through increased ties with China, Malaysia and other Asian nations.

This year's trade fair takes place amid a worsening economic crisis that has seen inflation shooting towards the 1,600 percent mark. The economic crisis has also spawned shortages of fuel, essential medicines and basic commodities.

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