

ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK



A CLEAR ELECTORAL ROADMAP CRITICAL FOR SUCCESSFUL 2018 ELECTIONS - ZESN

11 January 2018 – The Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) notes the Biometric Voter Registration mop up which commenced on 10 January 2018 in response to calls by various stakeholders for an extension of the registration exercise. Voter registration is one of the most critical elements of an electoral cycle as such ZESN urges the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) to avail adequate voter education in the areas where the mop up exercise is being conducted. As ZEC concludes the Biometric Voter Registration (BVR) exercise, ZESN reiterates its calls for a complete, accurate and comprehensive voters' roll, a clear election roadmap, the creation of a conducive political environment among other key electoral processes leading up to the 2018 elections.

Finalization of the voters' roll

ZESN applauds the mop up exercise of the BVR and calls upon ZEC to ensure that some of the challenges that were experienced during the BVR Blitz which concluded on 19 December 2017 such as power challenges for the BVR kits, intimidation of voters by political players and traditional leaders, unavailability of commissioners of oaths and affidavit forms (VR9) at some centres and inadequate voter education are addressed. In addition, ZESN urges the electoral Commission to consider extending registration to persons in hospitals and those in prisons and to ensure that the special vote is reinstated. It is imperative that the voter registration and inspection processes are successfully concluded to facilitate the creation of a complete, accurate, inclusive and current voters' roll.

Furthermore, ZESN calls upon ZEC to provide clarity regarding the procurement of the Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS) which has been subject to controversy according to media reports.

Election calendar and timelines

ZESN notes the pronouncements by President Emmerson Mnangagwa that the government is committed to ensuring that the 2018 elections are credible, free and fair. ZESN reiterates its calls for a detailed election calendar and a comprehensive 2018 electoral roadmap to enable electoral stakeholders to adequately plan interventions in support of these electoral processes. The election calendar should have a detailed roadmap with specific start and end dates for different processes such as the voters' roll inspection, voter education, campaign period and nomination process among others.

Appointment of ZEC chair

The ZEC is currently seized with a number of critical issues to implement, such as the voter registration, inspection and deduplication exercise and will benefit from the expeditious appointment of a substantive chairperson. In view of the fact that elections are due by August 2018, it is imperative that a substantive Chairperson be appointed to allow for sufficient time to acclimatize to the new position and oversee key electoral processes. The appointment of the new ZEC chairperson should be in line with provisions of Section 238 of the Constitution and the principles of rationality and natural justice. The new chairperson must safeguard the independence of the Commission and abide by the ethics in electoral management which are independence, transparency, integrity, professionalism, competence and fairness.

Conclusion

ZESN reiterates its calls for the government to align electoral related laws with the Constitution, avail adequate resources to ZEC, and facilitate the creation of a democratic electoral environment that guarantees the respect and enjoyment of universal suffrage and fundamental freedoms as enshrined in the Constitution of Zimbabwe. ZESN remains committed to the promotion of democratic elections in Zimbabwe.

PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS IN ZIMBABWE

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