

**ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK**



**STATEMENT ON THE OPENING OF THE PROCLAMATION OF THE ELECTION DATE**

**31 May 2018** – The Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) notes the proclamation of 30 July 2018 as the date for the harmonised election in terms of Section 38 of the Electoral Act. ZESN calls upon all stakeholders to heed repeated pronouncements made by the President that the country should hold free, fair and credible elections by committing to peaceful campaigns devoid of violence and hate speech. In order to ensure that there is smooth implementation of key electoral processes in the run up to the election, ZESN calls upon the government to avail adequate resources on time to the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC).

The proclamation comes after changes were made to the Electoral Law, with the gazetting of the Electoral Amendment Act. These changes include; the closing of voter registration 2 days after proclamation of election date and provision for visually impaired voters to be assisted by a person of their choice without the presiding officer being present, code of conduct amongst others.

ZESN urges the ZEC to finalise the process of compiling the voters' roll in time and ensure that the final voters' roll is comprehensive, accurate and current. This will enhance public trust and confidence in the electoral process. ZESN reiterates its calls for the Commission to avail the voters' roll to all stakeholders in a format that is analyzable in order to promote transparency and confidence building.

The political environment should be conducive for a free, fair and credible election. ZESN thus reiterates its position for a peaceful election and further urges political parties to campaign in a non-violent manner and to desist from hate speech. Traditional leaders and the security sector must adhere to their Constitutional mandates and remain non-partisan and respect fundamental freedoms such as freedoms of expression, choice, assembly, association and movement must be respected and observed in the run-up to the elections. ZESN urges citizens to be tolerant of divergent opinions and different political persuasions.

The ZEC should put in place mechanisms for robustly monitoring the media to ensure compliance with regulations.

ZESN stresses the need for transparency in all electoral processes; hence it is crucial for ZEC to ensure that key electoral information is made available timeously such as disclosing information on the procurement of ballot materials. In addition, ZESN calls upon ZEC and civic society organisations to provide inclusive, gender-sensitive and adequate voter education.

As part of its oversight role, ZESN will observe the 2018 harmonised elections and in particular all processes leading up to elections. ZESN will continue to provide frequent updates and reports pertaining to all electoral processes in Zimbabwe.

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### **PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS IN ZIMBABWE**

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