



**Zimbabwe Election
Support Network** ■
Promoting Democratic
Elections In Zimbabwe

Press Statement

ZESN STATEMENT ON 44th INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATIONS

18 April 2024- The Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) joins the nation in celebrating its 44th independence running under the theme, "**Zim@44: Unity, peace and development towards Vision 2030.**" The Uhuru celebrations come at a time when the Network acknowledges the remarkable progress the country has made in upholding the principles of electoral democracy since 1980.

Among the achievements are - the enjoyment of fundamental rights; one man one vote which ensures universal suffrage; consistent conduct of periodic elections at constitutionally set intervals; the setting up of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission to manage elections in Zimbabwe; voting in one day; counting of results at polling stations and posting of results outside polling stations which has significantly improved transparency in elections and the introduction of the Biometric Voter Registration which has contributed towards the significant improvement of the Voters Roll.

Independence Day also comes at a time when ZESN is advocating for electoral reforms, urging the government and all electoral stakeholders to reconsider proposals submitted by ZESN and various Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) during the previous electoral cycle to enhance the credibility and integrity of elections. This call comes against the backdrop of the 2023 Harmonised Elections, which were conducted without significant electoral reforms.

Although in 2022, the Zimbabwean government made amendments to the Electoral Act through the Electoral Amendment Bill, such as removing the driver's license as proof of identity, ZESN believes these changes primarily addressed nominal and administrative reforms, overlooking crucial reforms essential for transparent and credible elections. Substantive electoral reforms, which stakeholders had been advocating for, were omitted from the amendments to the Electoral Act.

Zimbabwe's founding tenets are rooted in respect for the Constitution, the rule of law, fundamental human rights and freedoms, diverse cultural, religious and traditional values, gender equality, good governance and regular elections, stemming from the election results of 1980 that led to the transition to Independence.

Despite the country conducting regular elections every five (5) years, ZESN emphasizes the need for the government and political parties to establish an environment conducive to upholding the basic tenets of democracy. This includes promoting a multi-party

democratic political system; conducting credible elections; enhancing the rights of all political parties and citizens; and promoting transparency, justice, accountability and responsiveness.

Elections play a pivotal role in allowing the electorate to select leaders for governance and decision-making positions. ZESN urges elected leaders to enhance accountability mechanisms to citizens as part of efforts to uphold the essence of good governance and democratic principles.

In its quest for a Zimbabwe where democratic election principles are upheld, ZESN reiterates its call for comprehensive and timely strengthening of the progress made thus far in improving the quality of elections. This includes aligning electoral laws fully with the Constitution; strengthening ZEC capacity and accountability to conduct electoral processes effectively and transparently; fostering a political environment conducive to holding free, fair, peaceful and credible elections; ensuring adequate representation of marginalized groups; electoral stakeholders to have access to justice, reduced election-related violence and adopting alternative dispute resolution mechanisms as well as instituting an efficient and transparent results management process.

Happy 44th Independence Zimbabwe, Let us honour the spirit of freedom and unity as we celebrate our nation's independence together.//ENDS

PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS IN ZIMBABWE

FOR COMMENTS AND FURTHER DETAILS CONTACT

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