



**Zimbabwe Election
Support Network** ■

Promoting Democratic
Elections In Zimbabwe

Press Statement

ZESN URGES GOVERNMENT TO DOMESTICATE ACDEG THROUGH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ELECTORAL REFORMS

17 March 2022 -As Zimbabwe readies for the 2023 harmonized elections, the Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) implores the government of Zimbabwe to implement electoral reforms in line with the dictates of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG).

Some of these reforms include; the need to create a conducive electoral environment that will see the effective participation of citizens without fear, as well as reviewing outstanding electoral administration issues which will lead to free, fair and credible elections; enhancing the participation of women; the youth and people with disabilities in electoral processes as candidates and voters; extending voting rights to those in the diaspora and prisons; and the setting up of the Integrity and Ethics Committee to deal with the misdemeanors of traditional leaders in elections. This follows the completion of the formal ratification procedures for ACDEG by the Government of Zimbabwe. After depositing the Instrument of Ratification to the African Union, it means that Zimbabwe has become a State Party bound by the Charter. ZESN and other CSOs have been lobbying for the ratification of the Charter which was signed on the 21st March 2018 at an AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government in Rwanda by President Emmerson Mnangagwa.

The Charter sets standards for better governance across Africa by promoting and emphasizing on good governance, popular participation, rule of law and human rights. It also speaks strongly against '*unconstitutional changes of governments*' and encourages '*change of power based on the holding of regular, free, fair and transparent elections conducted by competent, independent, and impartial national electoral bodies.*' Further, the Charter encourages state parties to adapt and implement sustainable development policies, promote transparency in public sector management and create conducive conditions for civil society organizations to exist and operate within the law.

Zimbabwe becomes a party to the Charter at a time when the country is already gearing up for elections, particularly the March 26 by-elections, and the 2023 harmonized elections. In light of that, ZESN implores the government not to take the ratification of the Charter as an end in itself

but rather as a stepping stone for the implementation of electoral reforms and levelling of the electoral playing field.

ZESN condemns in its strongest terms acts of violence that have been reported in the by-elections campaigns, which to date has claimed the life of one person and seriously injured several people. ZESN also bemoans the use of hate speech, incitements, biased application of the law and unequal access to public media and calls on the government to implement a number of pertinent reforms as recommended by the 2018 local, regional and international observer missions related to the electoral architecture, the political environment and ZEC operations.

ZESN reiterates that the implementation of electoral reforms in the spirit of the ACDEG is necessary for enhancing and strengthening the quality of democracy, elections and governance in Zimbabwe. End//

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