



## **ZESN COMMEMORATES INTERNATIONAL DAY OF DEMOCRACY**

**15 September 2025** - The Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) joins the global community in marking International Democracy Day 2025. This year, the world is focused on a critical new frontier for democratic governance: "Ensuring effective governance of AI at all levels." This theme goes beyond acknowledging AI's potential and calls all stakeholders to a new level of action and accountability.

As the world commemorates the International Day of Democracy, ZESN acknowledges the 21st anniversary of the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF) and its commitment to strengthening democratic values around the world. ZESN recognises that the future of democracy hinges on the ability to govern technology and not be governed by it. The challenge is clear: AI has the power to either amplify the voices of the people, as highlighted in the UN's "From Voice to Action" theme, or it can be a tool for disinformation, manipulation, and the suppression of democratic participation.

The Network has noted that, AI can be used to enhance efficiency and transparency in electoral processes. However, without effective governance, this technology could become a threat to the very principles it is meant to support through creation of new forms of disenfranchisement or deepen existing biases. This is not just a technical issue; it's a matter of ensuring that the benefits of progress are shared equitably and that the most vulnerable are not left behind.

ZESN therefore calls on all electoral stakeholders to embrace AI and new technologies based on core principles such as transparency and accountability, inclusion and protection as well as active citizen participation for effective governance of AI.

The Network highlights that the algorithms that influence elections must be open to scrutiny with clear frameworks for independent audits and oversight set in place to ensure AI systems are free from bias and misuse. Public trust in electoral process depends on it. As the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) emphasizes in its theme on gender equality, democratic progress is incomplete if it leaves anyone behind. AI systems must be designed to promote inclusivity, not create new barriers. ZESN urges stakeholders to ensure that they proactively protect the rights of marginalized communities and ensure that technology serves to empower, not to exclude.

The Network is of the view that, the governance of AI cannot be left to a few experts. Citizens, political parties, and civil society must have a voice in shaping the policies that govern these systems. As the UN theme "From Voice to Action" suggests, collective voices must drive the necessary reforms to ensure that AI is a tool for good.

On this International Democracy Day, ZESN calls on all stakeholders, government, political parties, civil society, and citizens to move beyond a conversation about potential and to take concrete action. There is need for coordination in establishing robust governance frameworks that ensure AI strengthens Zimbabwe's democratic institutions, protects fundamental rights, and ultimately builds a more resilient and inclusive democracy for all Zimbabweans. ///ENDS

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## **PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS IN ZIMBABWE**

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