

ZESN IMploRES ALL STAKEHOLDERS TO FOSTER PEACE TO ENSURE DEVELOPMENT

21 September 2021 – As we celebrate the International Day of Peace, running under this year's theme, **“Recovering better for an equitable and sustainable world,”** the Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) implores all stakeholders to engage and work together in fostering peace building initiatives to ensure sustainable peace and development in the country.

The International Day of Peace or Peace Day is observed around the World annually on 21 September. Established in 1981 by unanimous United Nations resolution, Peace Day provides a globally shared date for all humanity to commit to Peace above all differences and to contribute to building a Culture of Peace.

As Zimbabwe joins the rest of the world in commemorating this special day, ZESN strongly believes that **Peace** can be sustained through a multi-stakeholder approach and appreciation of the unique roles each stakeholder plays.

The Network calls for the strengthening of the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC) and the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC), Faith Based Organizations (FBOs), Civic Society Organizations (CSOs), Community Based Organizations (CBOs), Education Institutions, political parties and the media as they are critical stakeholders to fostering a culture of peace and tolerance in the society.

ZESN acknowledges and applauds the significant role that NPRC, ZHRC, FBOs, CSOs and CBOs play in conflict resolution, through peacebuilding education and teaching; early warning; mediation; emergency relief and support; information and data collecting as well as advocacy. Educational institutions on the other hand are key as they are conduits of values in peace, coexistence and tolerance promotion.

Further, ZESN notes the significant role of the traditional justice system which has seen Traditional leaders being consulted to reinstate reconciliation and accord within the community on many issues including political and election related matters. The Network thus calls upon the government and CSOs to provide traditional leaders with the requisite skills in public administration, developmental policies and law so that they can effectively settle community disputes across their jurisdictions as vanguards of traditional law. In addition, ZESN calls upon traditional leaders to undertake their duties in a non-partisan manner as enshrined in Section 281 subsection 2 (a) and (b) of the Constitution which stipulates that; *Traditional leaders must not be members of any political party or in any way participate in partisan politics; act in a partisan manner.* Efforts must be made to ensure the role of Chiefs continues to be undergirded by the Constitution. CSOs must continue with their watchdog role to ensure tenets of democracy and adherence to human rights are maintained and upheld.

Media is the sword arm of democracy as it protects public interest against malpractice and creates public awareness. ZESN urges the media to promote peacebuilding and coexistence through balanced and non-partisan reportage to foster democracy. Both the public and private media should be instrumental in uniting all people from all walks of life despite their political affiliation to ensure sustainable peace.

ZESN calls upon the government to strengthen conflict resolution mechanisms and early warning systems to ensure that peace, tolerance and respect of human rights are upheld in Zimbabwe. ZESN is committed to the promotion of peaceful, democratic and credible elections in Zimbabwe.// **ENDS**