

ZESN STATEMENT ON INTERNATIONAL DAY OF DEMOCRACY

Harare 15 September 2021 – The Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) joins Zimbabwe and the World at large in commemorating the International Day of Democracy on this 15th day of September 2021 running under the theme, “Strengthening democratic resilience in the face of future crises.” Democracy Day is celebrated annually to review the state of democracy in the world and uphold and promote democracy and its principles.

The United Nations defines democracy as a state where the people have rights, especially to vote for and elect their government and regulation from among themselves, rather than being controlled by a government over whom they have no right of dissent, election or protest. Lack of democracy can lead to lack of rights or a voice, and this impacts on human rights as set out by the UN.

This day comes amid the battle with the COVID-19 pandemic which has led to fatalities, surge in infections and the closure of so many multi-sectoral spaces. Democracy has also suffered a huge blow especially in Zimbabwe; with the indefinite suspension of by-elections and other electoral activities. This has led to the quarantining of democracy and prevention of equal participation of citizens in democratic electoral and governance processes.

Civic society and institutions supporting democracy constantly appeal for multi-stakeholder efforts towards the promotion of inclusion, equal treatment, and participation in democratic governance issues by citizens to ensure sustainable peace and development. International Day of Democracy presents ZESN with the opportunity to reiterate its calls for the government to uphold the principle of holding periodic elections by universal suffrage and to put in place measures that ensure inclusive participation in elections, especially of women, People with Disabilities (PWDs), and youths in Zimbabwe.

Despite the fact that women constitute the demographic majority, and youths account for the largest voting population, their participation, especially as candidates, in elections has been very low. This has resulted in the limited representation and participation of these important constituencies in the governance of the country.

ZESN remains committed to promoting democratic elections in Zimbabwe that are free and fair elections in line with international best practices and respect for human rights. Voter registration is a continuous process in Zimbabwe, hence the Network implores all citizens that are 18 years of age and above to register to vote to ensure they all participate in the democratic electoral processes. /////////////// **Ends**