

## ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK



### **FINALIZATION OF ELECTORAL LAW REFORM CRITICAL TO CREDIBLE ELECTIONS- ZESN**

**17 April 2018** – The Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) notes with concern delays by the Parliament of Zimbabwe to finalize the process of enacting comprehensive reforms to the Electoral Act in line with constitutional provisions. ZESN calls upon legislators and the Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs to urgently consider the proposed amendments to the electoral laws as further delays will only serve to jeopardise the credibility of the impending 2018 elections.

ZESN reiterates its position that the country's electoral laws are significantly inadequate thus the need for urgent reform to create an enabling framework for the holding of free, fair, peaceful and credible elections. The Network calls upon legislators to put aside political differences and finalise the reform process especially given the imminence of the 2018 elections.

While ZESN recognises some of the proposed amendments which include a provision for the closing of the voters' roll before nomination, the network calls for full enforcement of current provisions such as the obligation of the public media to give fair coverage to all political parties and candidates. Based on previous experiences, there is need for enforcement of the current provisions for persons who will need assistance to vote to avoid abuse of the facility on election day.

As part of the proposed legal reforms, ZESN is calling for the Parliament of Zimbabwe to be accorded the oversight role over the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) as opposed to the Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs to ensure that its independence is not compromised by the Executive or any power or authority. Furthermore, executive interference in electoral processes such as its seconding of persons to the Observer Accreditation Committee and in the enactment of electoral regulations must be removed.

In addition, ZESN calls upon the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission to publicize the procedures in the respect of data management, security and the deduplication process in order to enhance transparency and stakeholder confidence in line with Section 156 of the Constitution. The absence of clear regulations on the management of information captured during the Biometric Voter Registration (BVR) exercise compromises the integrity of the entire voter registration process.

ZESN believes that it is essential for the political players to demonstrate genuine political will to effect electoral reforms which are critical to the creation of an enabling electoral environment. If the country is to hold free, fair and credible elections as pronounced by the President, ZEC Chairperson and government officials, it is imperative that the Electoral Act is fully aligned with the Constitution well in advance of the impending harmonised election to give adequate time for the implementation of the reforms.

ZESN is committed to the promotion of democratic electoral processes in Zimbabwe.

#### **PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS IN ZIMBABWE**

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