

## **ZESN POSITION ON THE PROPOSED REMOVAL OF THE PRESIDENTIAL RUNNING MATE IN THE CONSTITUTION**

**16 January 2020-** The Zimbabwe Election Support Network notes with concern the proposed changes in the Constitutional Amendment Bill to remove the Presidential Running Mate Clause. The move is retrogressive and an affront to the will of the people as expressed in the referendum on the new Constitution in 2013.

ZESN is of the view that the suggested changes to the Constitution with regard to the removal of the concept of presidential running mates is a reversal of some of the gains that were going to be realized upon the activation of the Clauses in 2023 providing for the running mates. This position is informed by the fact that:

**1. Internal Political Instability** of both the ruling ZANU-PF party and the main opposition MDC-Alliance have been largely informed by the apparent lack of succession planning in both parties. This gap has had a significant knock-on effect on the political stability of the government and the nation at large as internal party fights have often spilled into government. The running mate clause provision was going to support as well as formalise the selection of Vice Presidents of the respective political parties, hence provide a measure of predictability and stability in the leadership transition processes whenever they occurred at both party or government level.

**2. Strengthened Mandate to Govern:** currently, the country's Vice Presidents do not have an express mandate from the citizens to govern as they are not elected, but rather appointed by the President. Every time they stand in as acting President, it means for that period the country would be governed by persons without a direct mandate to govern. The running mate clause was intended to enhance our democracy by ensuring that at any given time the country is governed by those who derived a direct mandate from the people.

We take cognisance of the desire, through the Unity Accord signed in 1987, to unite Zimbabwe, promote peace, law, and order and to guarantee social and economic development and political stability and are mindful that the Unity Accord led to the adoption of the system of two vice presidents for the Republic. However, the people spoke during the constitutional making process and voted decisively at the referendum against having two vice presidents in favour of the adoption of the running mate clause. The will of the people must be respected. Zimbabweans who voted for the clause are looking forward to its coming into force in 2023. For a few elected individuals to obliterate the clause before it even sees the light of day is a blatant disregard of the views of the people who deployed parliamentarians and the executive in the first place. The test of the pudding is in the eating. Allow the people of Zimbabwe to test what they believe is the solution to transparent leadership transition processes.

### **Conclusion**

ZESN does not, therefore, support the removal of the Presidential Mate running clause. ZESN, however, remains committed to the promotion of democratic elections in Zimbabwe and the provision of running mates, an integral part of the grundnorm, will contribute to the safeguarding of democratic electoral processes in Zimbabwe. ENDS//

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PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS IN ZIMBABWE

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