



29 JUNE 2008

THE PAN-AFRICAN PARLIAMENT ELECTION OBSERVER MISSION TO THE PRESIDENTIAL RUN-OFF AND PARLIAMENTARY BY-ELECTIONS IN ZIMBABWE

INTERIM STATEMENT

Prior to the arrival of the main Mission team on 14 June 2008, an Advance Team of ten (10) MPs and eight (8) support staff was deployed on 8 June 2008 with the objective of assessing the prevailing pre-election environment by monitoring the state of preparedness and the political developments in the country. Following their accreditation, the Advance Team visited the suburbs of Harare and neighbouring provinces of Mashonaland East, Central and West and Manicaland. The Team also held preliminary meetings with a number of election stakeholders in Harare.

On 14 June, the main group of observers arrived in Harare. Between the 17 and 18 June 2008, the Mission held briefings with election stakeholders. The Mission invited the presidential candidates, civil society organisations, University of Zimbabwe academics, the media and diplomatic corps.

The Mission adopted an open-door policy which allowed individual members of the public to bring to the Mission's attention any election-related incident.

On 19 June, the Mission deployed a total of sixteen (16) teams to all ten provinces.

1. The Pan-African Election Observer Mission:

- **cognisant** of the report of the Advance Team;
- **considering** the three days intense interaction with various stakeholders;
- **analysing** reports from the Mission's Observer teams; and
- **noting** the results of investigations carried out in the field; the mission observed the following:

i. The prevailing political environment throughout the country was tense, hostile and volatile as it has been characterised by an electoral campaign marred by high levels of intimidation, violence, displacement of people, abductions, and loss of life:

- The Mission observed traces of intimidation and violence in all provinces it visited. Houses burnt down, people assaulted and sustained serious injuries.
- Violence disrupted normal life of ordinary Zimbabweans and led to internal displacement of people. The Mission visited various locations of the evicted and displaced.

- A number of cases of abduction, some of which resulted in deaths, were reported. The Mission visited aggrieved/bereaved families, obtaining official a post-mortem report and attended the funeral of one such victim.
- ii. Hate speech, incitement of violence and war rhetoric instilled fear and trepidation amongst voters. Statements made by esteemed leaders in Zimbabwe make it difficult to dismiss claims of state-sponsored violence and it is highly regrettable.
- iii. Restrictions on the fundamental civil and political rights such as freedom of assembly and freedom of movement:
- The Mission was able to attend star rallies organised by the Presidential candidate of ZANU-PF. However, it noted with grave concern that the MDC Presidential candidate was not accorded the opportunity to hold rallies.
 - The Mission was disturbed by the numerous arrests that the MDC Presidential candidate was subjected to. Such a move is inconsistent with a free-flowing electoral process.
- iv. Overwhelming lack of access to the public media by the Opposition:
- According to Section 3 of the Electoral Act, the ZEC failed to ensure that there was “*reasonable access to the media*” by both parties. Regrettably, the State-controlled media was used as a vehicle to discredit the opposition candidate in all forms.
- v. Political tolerance in Zimbabwe has deteriorated to the lowest ebb in recent history:
- Compared to the Harmonised Elections held in March 29, the level of tolerance between ZANU-PF and MDC supporters leading up to the 27 June Presidential Run-off Election had deteriorated to unprecedented levels. On account of an electoral process, neighbours have turned enemies, Zimbabwean against Zimbabwean, etc.
 - In this Presidential Run-off, the Mission observed a number of defaced and ripped election posters.
- vi. Numerous road blocks by militia-type groups allegedly identified with the ruling party, seriously curtailed free movement of ordinary Zimbabweans and commuters:
- Some of the Mission teams experienced these road-blocks first hand.
- vii. Restrictions on accreditation of local observers:
- The Mission noted that the rules of accreditation that obtained in March for local observers had changed leading to dramatic scaling down of the number accredited. For instance, the Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) which covered all the polling stations in an efficient manner were regrettably offered limited accreditation which compelled them to pull out from observing the electoral process.
- viii. Lack of transparency of the postal voting process, coupled with allegations of lack of secrecy of the vote:
- Numerous complaints received by the Mission indicated that the postal voting was conducted in a non-transparent manner. Attempts by the mission to observe and verify were met by denial of access.
 - When raising the issue with ZEC, the Mission was informed that, as the law stands currently, the commanding officer is the only authority who grants access to observers using his/her discretion.

ix. Politicisation of security forces led to lack of impartiality and loss of confidence in the voting process:

- Overall, the Mission noted that the leadership of the security forces have not changed their position of overt support to the ruling party despite calls, following the March Harmonised Elections. The discriminatory treatment in granting permission for the holding of campaign rallies, reluctance to arrest alleged ZANU-PF aligned individuals perpetrating violence, is cause for concern.
- The Mission was dismayed by uniformed police officers on duty wearing the ruling party regalia.

x. The independence and impartiality of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission is rendered questionable. The role of ZEC in this particular election has been more wanting than the previous election. Its deafening silence was alarming and created a perception of a sequestered body.

2. Voting Day

The voting day was fairly quiet. Voters proceeded to cast their ballots in an orderly manner.

- Generally, voter turn-out was relatively low. It is unclear if some voters heeded the call to boycott elections or it was mere voter apathy. It is surprising though that the MDC Presidential candidate who withdrew from the Run-off, was still voted for by a significant number of voters.
- In many polling stations visited by our Mission, it was noted that certain male-dominated groups intercepted voters and gave them pieces of paper on which they were required to write the serial number of their ballots.
- An unusually high percentage of spoilt ballots were recorded in the polling stations where our Mission observed the counting process. Unpalatable messages were written on many of those spoilt ballots.

3. Conclusions:

- i. In view of the above the Mission concludes that the current atmosphere prevailing in the country did not give rise to the conduct of free, fair and credible elections.
- ii. Conditions should be put in place for the holding of free, fair and credible elections as soon as possible in line with the African Union Declaration on the Principles Governing Democratic Elections
- iii. In the interim, the PAP Mission calls on the SADC leaders working together with the African Union to engage the broader political leadership in Zimbabwe into a negotiated transitional settlement.

Hon. Marwick T. Khumalo
Mission Leader