



**POST-ELECTION DAY INTERIM STATEMENT OF THE
SOUTHERN AFRICA DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY - ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK (SADC
ESN) FOR ZIMBABWE'S 2013 HARMONISED ELECTIONS**

1 AUGUST, 2013, HOLIDAY INN, HARARE

About SADC-ESN

The SADC-ESN is a network of civic organisations who actively participate in electoral issues within the SADC region. The network has a membership of fifteen (15) organisations drawn from Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. As a network, our aim is to build capacity of our members and share regional best practices, through mutual reinforcement and dialogue. We envisage forming a unified lobby and platform for constitutional and electoral reforms with the view to contributing towards strengthening democratic governance and practice in the respective countries of the SADC region. The network has previously commissioned observer missions to Malawi, Zambia, Lesotho, Namibia and South Africa. SADC-ESN was also privileged to observe the Zimbabwe National Referendum on the Constitution early this year.

SADC-ESN'S ROLE IN THE ZIMBABWE ELECTIONS

The SADC-ESN deployed an observation mission for the 2013 Harmonised Elections in Zimbabwe in pursuit of its Vision for Democratic and Peaceful Elections in the SADC region. Its Mission is that of promoting democratic elections in the SADC region through networking with domestic observation groups. The objectives of the Observer Mission were as follows:-

- (i). To assess whether the elections were conducted in accordance with the country's own Constitutional and legal framework, as well as the African Union, SADC and other principles, guidelines and standards governing the conduct of democratic elections.
- (ii) To observe the relevant aspects of the preparation, organization and conduct of the 2013 Harmonised Elections in Zimbabwe.
- (iii). To provide an opportunity for SADC-ESN member organisations to learn from Zimbabwe's Electoral Process and also share lessons and best practices in democratic governance in general and the electoral process in particular,
- (iv). To make recommendations that would improve the conduct of future elections in

Zimbabwe and other SADC countries.

METHOD OF WORK

As part of its preparatory work, the SADC-ESN conducted two training sessions for its observers in election management and observation to acquaint its observers with the process.

Prior to the Election Day deployment, SADC-ESN also held meetings with stakeholders to assess and share views and opinions on the electoral environment in which the elections were going to be held.

On the polling day, the SADC - ESN deployed thirty –four (34) regional observers covering all the ten provinces of Zimbabwe namely Harare, Matebeleland North, Matebeleland South, Manicaland, Masvingo, Mashonaland Central, Bulawayo, Midlands, Mashonaland East and Mashonaland West. Our Election Day analysis is based on a total of around 200 polling stations visited by our observers during yesterday's poll.

The following were some of the observations of the SADC-ESN, based on a qualitative analysis of the electoral process for the 2013 Harmonised elections in Zimbabwe:

(1). Pre-election Period

This period was characterised by contention on the convenient date for election, leading to a court process, which however, was upheld by the Constitutional Court. The contention was that the date of elections unilaterally proclaimed by the Republican President in spite of appeals from many local stakeholder groups as well as the special SADC Summit on Zimbabwe held in Maputo in June, 2013. This gave stakeholders very little time to prepare for the elections adequately.

- The period set for Mobile Voter Registration was considered inadequate, coupled with a dearth of information on the exercise, thereby leaving out potential registrants.
- Voter education was not sufficiently conducted due to restrictions even where civic organisations sought to legitimately compliment the process. This was critical given the constitutional amendments and changes to the legal framework under which the elections were going to be held.
- The failure by the Registrar General's Office to avail the Voters register in good time caused anxiety among stakeholders. This remained a contentious issue up to the time of the elections, particularly that the responsible office failed completely to avail an electronic voters' register as provided for in section 21 of the Electoral Act. This would have enabled an analysis of the voters' roll to dispel misgivings expressed by various stakeholders on its accuracy.
- Reforms to some pieces of legislation that have an impact on the electoral process such as the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) and the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) were not undertaken. As a result, media coverage of political parties remained polarised despite the ZEC having in place a Committee which was charged with the responsibility of ensuring equitable media coverage.
- The special vote was clearly marred with inadequacies which prompted the Constitutional Court to grant the ZEC authority to allow personnel that that were targeted to vote on this day to do so on the election day.

2). Election Day

- The Election Day environment remained generally peaceful and orderly, with the election progressing well from opening until closing. Our observers on the ground were satisfied with conduct of the larger part of the Election Day proceedings, noting that people were able to exercise their right to vote. The relevant materials for use during voting were available in the polling stations and the polls commenced generally on time, with just a few that opened some minutes after the prescribed time. Priority voting was given to pregnant women and disabled people in the polling stations observed. However, our observers did witness the turning away of voters whose names were either not found in the register or had inappropriate documents. In Lupane East, at the time of counting, it was discovered that ballot papers for a different constituency had been used. Cases of missing ballot pages were also noted.

Conclusion

SADC-ESN would particularly like to commend ZEC for doing their best under the circumstances to deliver this election. Their proactive role in keeping stakeholders regularly informed helped to reduce anxiety among stakeholders. We urge the Registrar of Voters' Office to take a similar proactive approach in meeting the information needs of stakeholders, especially given their mandate to compile the voter's register which is a very critical ingredient to any credible election.

- In view of the foregoing, SADC-ESN would like to acknowledge the peaceful and orderly in which the voting process proceeded. It is our considered view that the environment preceding the Election Day was relatively conducive to allow for free participation of the electorate. However, the concerns raised entail that there is still room for continuous improvement of the electoral process in Zimbabwe, particularly against the background of the last presidential run-off which left sad memories in the minds of most Zimbabweans. The counting and announcement of the results is a critical process that we will continue to observe and we will be issuing a final election statement when the entire process has been concluded. It is our hope that the result will reflect the desires and will of the Zimbabwean people and that results will be announced within the prescription of the Laws of Zimbabwe.
- We appeal for calm among political players and urge them to maintain the peace as we await the final results.

FOR DETAILS CONTACT: MR STEVE DUWA- (TEAMLEADER) or MRS MIRRIAM CHONYA CHINYAMA (SADC-ESN COORDINATOR) ON sadcesn@gmail.com