

IRI-NDI JOINT PRE-ELECTION STATEMENT FOR ZIMBABWE'S JULY 30, 2018 HARMONIZED, PRESIDENTIAL, PARLIAMENTARY, AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

Harare, Zimbabwe – Today, the [International Republican Institute](#) (IRI) and the [National Democratic Institute](#) (NDI) joint pre-election assessment mission delegation released its [pre-election statement](#) of findings and recommendations for Zimbabwe's July 30, 2018, harmonized presidential, parliamentary, and local government elections.

Conducted from June 2-8, this delegation represents an important component of the IRI-NDI joint Zimbabwe International Election Observation Mission and includes regional and election experts from Africa, Europe and North America. The delegation is comprised of **Dr. Brigalia Bam**, former Chairperson of the Independent Electoral Commission of South Africa; **Hon. David Dreier**, former United States Congressman; **Senator Catherine Noone**, Deputy Leader of the Irish Senate; **Barry Jackson**, former chief of staff to Speaker of the US House of Representatives; **Elizabeth Lewis**, Deputy Director, Africa, IRI; **Sandra Pepera**, Director, Gender, Women and Democracy, NDI; **Larry Garber**, Co-Mission Director, NDI; and **Nicolas Teindas**, Co-Mission Director, IRI.

“While the IRI-NDI delegation found several notable improvements in the political environment and electoral preparations as compared to prior elections, a number of significant opportunities to break with the past have been missed,” said Mr. Dreier. “As a result, we still have concerns about the fairness of the process.”

The IRI-NDI pre-election assessment mission responds to the public welcome of international observers by President Mnangagwa, as well as requests from political leaders and civil society organizations. During the week-long assessment, the delegation met with government officials, political party leaders, candidates, election authorities, senior leadership of the police, and representatives of civil society and the international community.

“The people are hopeful for a new future and the election actors have a responsibility to build confidence with the people,” said Dr. Bam. “Based on my experience as a senior election official in South Africa, the opportunity still exists to take important steps to enhance the inclusiveness, transparency, and accountability of the process.”

The delegation recognizes that, ultimately, it will be the people of Zimbabwe who determine the credibility of their elections. IRI and NDI therefore offer this pre-election statement in the spirit of supporting and strengthening democratic institutions and accountability in Zimbabwe.

The statement highlights notable improvements in the electoral process, including public commitment to credible elections by President Mnangagwa, the welcoming of international observers, improvements in the political climate, the introduction of a Biometric Voter Registration process resulting in a new voters roll, and the court ruling barring traditional leaders from partisan politics.

According to the statement, some of the significant opportunities missed relate to the failure to date of the Zimbabwe Election Commission (ZEC) to provide necessary information regarding aspects of the electoral process; failure to provide the analyzable preliminary voters' roll to political parties and observers; and the late condemnation of the collection of voter registration serial numbers.

“With seven weeks remaining until Election Day, the joint IRI-NDI mission recognizes that there are practical steps that can be taken to help Zimbabwe break with its history of flawed elections and enhance inclusiveness, transparency, and accountability,” said Senator Noone. “We are hopeful that the observations presented in this statement will be helpful leading up to Election Day.”

Based on consultations over the past week, the delegation's statement provides recommendations for the ZEC, the military, other government bodies, candidates, political parties, civil society organizations, and the media.

The delegation's most critical recommendations called for: extensive voter education on the secrecy of the vote; a public commitment by the military to serve the winning presidential candidate regardless of their party affiliation; and the ZEC to:

- Distribute an *analyzable* final voters' roll at the close of nomination process;
- Allow for *meaningful* observation by political parties of the procurement, printing, storage and distribution of ballots; and
- Publicize plans for the tabulation and announcement of results.

The joint IRI-NDI delegation would like to express its sincere appreciation for the warm welcome they received in Zimbabwe, as well as for the time taken by many people from different perspectives to inform its efforts.

IRI and NDI have organized more than 200 international election observer missions around the globe, earning a reputation for impartiality and

professionalism. In Zimbabwe, the IRI-NDI mission conducts its activities in accordance with the *Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and Code of Conduct* adopted by the United Nations in 2005, and will base its findings on international standards for elections. The mission's approach is consistent with regional instruments to which Zimbabwe is a signatory, including the *African Union Declaration on the Principles Governing Democratic Elections in Africa* and the *SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections*. All activities are conducted on a strictly nonpartisan basis and without interfering in the election process.