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**REPORT ON THE
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTION OBSERVATION DELEGATION TO
THE HARMONISED ELECTIONS IN ZIMBABWE
(28 July -1 August 2018)**

Annexes:
A List of participants
B Declaration of Mr Norbert Neuser, Chair of the EP Delegation
C EU Election Observation Mission Press Release

INTRODUCTION

On 7 June 2018, Parliament's Conference of Presidents authorised the sending of a delegation to observe the Harmonised elections in Zimbabwe, scheduled for 30 July 2018.

The EP Delegation was made up of seven members led by Mr Norbert Neuser (S&D, Germany). The other members were Claudia Schmidt (EPP, Austria), Željana Zovko (EPP, Croatia), Joachim Zeller (EPP, Germany), Neena Gill Cbe (S&D, United Kingdom), Juan Fernando Lopez Aguilar (S&D, Spain), and Jozo Radoš (ALDE, Croatia).

The European Parliament delegation carried out its activities in Zimbabwe from 28 July to 1 August 2018. As usual, it was integrated into the EU Election Observation Mission (EOM) - the first one to be deployed to Zimbabwe since 2002. The EOM was present in Zimbabwe from 6 June 2018 and was led by MEP Elmar Brok (EPP, Germany). It comprised some 140 observers (including long-term and short term observers, the EP delegation, as well as diplomats from EU Member States resident in Zimbabwe, plus Canada, Norway and Switzerland). On Election Day, observers visited over 600 polling stations in 154 of the 210 constituencies in all ten provinces of Zimbabwe to observe voting and counting.

Other international observer missions were present in Zimbabwe during the election period, namely the African Union (AU), the Commonwealth of Nations, the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), a Joint International Observation Delegation of IRI and NDI, and the Carter Centre.

Parliament's delegation fully endorsed the findings of the EU EOM. The European Parliament delegation wishes to express its gratitude to Chief Observer Elmar Brok, Deputy Chief Observer Mark Stevens and the entire Core Team for their excellent cooperation both before and during the mission, as well as to Ambassador Philippe van Damme, Head of the European Union Delegation to Zimbabwe, and his colleagues for their support.

BACKGROUND

Following Mugabe's dismissal of Emmerson Mnangagwa as his Vice-President in early November 2017 - a move seen as positioning the veteran president's wife to become his successor - tensions started to build in Zimbabwe. On 15 November 2017, General Constantino Chiwenga, the Zimbabwe Defence Forces commander, announced on the public TV that the military had "secured" the first family and were working to arrest criminals in the presidential circle. On 21 November, after 37-year tenure, facing impeachment proceedings, Robert Mugabe resigned from the presidential post. The same day, ZANU-PF chose the new president of Zimbabwe, Emmerson Mnangagwa, who was inaugurated on 24 November.

The removal of Robert Mugabe prompted large-scale celebrations in the country's largest cities. To meet the international expectations for change, President Mnangagwa committed to economic and political reforms and "free, fair and credible elections" to be held within the constitutional terms.

The invitation to the European Union and other international organisations to observe the elections confirmed the beginning of a new re-engagement process, or the so called “new dispensation.”

The 30 July 2018 Harmonised Elections in Zimbabwe were thus historic as for the first time in Zimbabwe’s recent history neither Robert Mugabe who ruled the country since independence 1980, nor long-time contender Morgan Tsvangirai (who died of cancer in February 2018) contested the presidential election. There was a general perception for a significantly more open political space than seen in the past, with Zimbabweans expressing an unambiguous message of hope in democracy.

The Elections were for the direct election of the president (conducted under a majority system with a possible run-off if no candidate receives more than 50 per cent of the votes cast), 210 members of the National Assembly and local councillors. At the same time, ballots cast for the National Assembly were also used to determine a proportional allocation of seats for a women’s quota of a further 60 seats in the National Assembly, for the 60-member Senate and for the 100 members of the ten provincial councils.

23 presidential candidates were registered - the highest number in Zimbabwe’s history. This included four women, which is the first time there were female candidates for the presidency. For the National Assembly elections, 1,648 candidates contested, representing 43 political parties or standing as independents. Despite the large number of parliamentary and presidential candidates, in reality however there were only two significant political parties/coalitions/alliances and contenders - the incumbent ZANU-PF and its presidential candidate Emmerson Mnangagwa (a 75-year old war veteran and close ally of former President Robert Mugabe, who had occupied various governmental and ZANU-PF positions since 1980) vs the Movement for Democratic Change Alliance led by the 40-year old Nelson Chamisa. President Mnangagwa mainly relied on the support of the traditional ZANU-PF strongholds in rural areas, while Chamisa was seeking to maximise the urban and youth vote.

In this environment, Zimbabwe headed for the 30 July elections, intended to represent a crucial test for the country’s political reform following the military assisted transition in November 2017.

PROGRAMME OF THE DELEGATION

Before Election Day, the EP delegation met the EOM Core team led by Chief Observer Elmar Brok, the EU Heads of Missions, leaders or representatives of the two main political parties (including the MDC Alliance presidential candidate Nelson Chamisa), the Head of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission Priscilla Chigumba, the Police Commissioner General Godwin Matanga, the Secretary General of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches Rev. Dr. Kenneth Mtata, civil society representatives, experts and analysts, domestic and international observers.

On Election Day, the EP delegation split into three teams, observing in the city of Harare, Mashonaland West and Bulawayo and surroundings. MEPs were generally content with the conduct of the election, which took place in a rather peaceful atmosphere. The expectation for democracy was evident with citizens waiting patiently and calmly to cast their vote.

On the morning following the elections, the Head of the EP Delegation, accompanying the Chief Observer, met the heads of the other observer missions. A joint debriefing of the EP Delegation with the EU Ambassador and Heads of Missions of EU Member States also took place.

The press conference - during which Mr Neuser presented the findings of the EP Delegation, alongside the Chief Observer - took place on 1 August and was extremely well attended (more than any other Observation Mission press conference).

ASSESSMENT OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

The European Parliament's assessment of the elections mirrored that of the EU EOM. MEPs noted that notable positive developments took place in the run-up to the elections (as compared to nearly two decades of flawed elections and undemocratic rule). These included a public commitment by the President to holding credible elections and accepting the outcome; an improved political climate and opening of political space; welcoming of international observers; the establishment of a new voter roll; a significant involvement of civil society in the observation of voting; enacting a Political Party Code of Conduct; a historic peace pledge for “free and fair” elections signed by the presidential candidates. The elections were competitive, the campaign and Election Day were largely peaceful and, overall, political freedoms during the campaign, including freedom of movement, assembly and speech, were respected.

At the same time significant issues remained unaddressed such as the need to further strengthen the independence of the ZEC; misuse of state resources and lack of real level playing field; reduced opportunities for urban voters to register; widespread concerns about the secrecy of the vote; disenfranchisement of the diaspora vote (three million Zimbabweans are estimated to be living outside the country); media bias; partisan behaviour by traditional leaders; lack of transparency at certain stages of the process; instances of coercion and soft intimidation; insufficient voter education, etc. Important opportunities were missed to enhance the public confidence that Zimbabweans would be able to participate without fear in a credible electoral process.

On Election Day, MEPs found that the overall conduct inside the polling stations was orderly, and the voting procedure was organised efficiently by electoral officials. However, there were also several shortcomings, notably insufficient information for voters to identify the correct polling station, which led to confusion and frustration outside polling station, as well as an unusually high number of rejected voters and assisted voting.

At the press conference, the EP Head of Delegation called on the government and opposition leaders to be open to dialogue and to appeal to their supporters to remain calm whilst awaiting the official results. He also underlined that clear and conclusive results must be announced within the electoral deadline - ensuring transparency and traceability of counting would strengthen confidence in this step. Finally, he pointed out that these elections were a crucial step - but only a step - in Zimbabwe's political and overall reform. Elections are not an end in themselves, but an important part of a process of change and democratic revival. People have high hopes for the future and, regardless of who wins, it is the duty of political leaders to work to improve the lives of all citizens.

RESULTS

While the country stayed generally calm after polling, tension in Harare increased dramatically as the first parliamentary results indicated a clear lead for ZANU-PF. MDC Alliance leaders intensified their claims that the results for the presidential elections were being rigged. On 1 August a group of MDC Alliance supporters demonstrated in the vicinity of the ZEC command centre and the ZANU-PF headquarters, burning tires, setting alight a number of cars and commuter buses, and tearing down ZANU-PF billboards. The military was deployed to quell the unrest, firing live rounds into the crowd and leaving at least six people dead and 14 injured.

On 2 August, all the international observation missions in Zimbabwe - in a joint statement - expressed their grave concern about the regrettable outbreaks of post-election violence. Calling on political party supporters to abide by the law and denouncing the excessive use of force to quell protests, they urged the ZEC to release the full and detailed results expeditiously, in a transparent and accountable manner and urged all stakeholders and citizens to pursue grievances peacefully and through the established legal channels.

On 3 August, the ZEC chairperson declared the presidential results with the incumbent, Emmerson Mnangagwa of ZANU-PF, receiving 50.8% of the total votes cast, while the main opposition candidate, Nelson Chamisa of MDC Alliance, received 44.3%.

For the National Assembly results were officially announced for each constituency, with ZANU-PF winning 144 of the 210 constituencies and the MDC Alliance securing 64 seats. ZANU-PF maintained its traditional dominance in rural areas and made inroads in the “swing” provinces of Midlands and Masvingo, the home areas of President Mnangagwa. The two houses of Parliament have a combined membership of 350 parliamentarians. 116 of these parliamentarians are female, which gives women a 33.14% representation overall. This however represented a decrease on the figure of 35% in the previous Parliament, and was largely predicated upon the special measures for women’s representation provided for in the Constitution.

Following the announcement of the presidential results on 3 August, Nelson Chamisa claimed that he won the election, rejecting the results as "fraudulent, illegal, illegitimate" and vowing to challenge them in court. The Constitutional court heard and considered MDC Alliance Election complaints and finally ruled on 24 August, dismissing all petitions as lacking primary evidence, thus confirming Mnangagwa as duly elected President (Elect) of Zimbabwe. The MDC Alliance said that although it accepts the Court’s decision they will appeal to other African courts. On 26 August, Mnangagwa was inaugurated as President of Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe government has set up a Post-election violence enquiry consisting of eminent international analysts.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The EOM remained in Zimbabwe during the entire electoral process and will produce a final report of the conclusion of the electoral process. This final report will contain recommendations aiming to improve aspects of the electoral process.

The European Parliament delegation was a key element in the evaluation of the electoral situation in Zimbabwe. The EP delegation therefore recommends that the Democracy Support and Election Coordination Group (DEG), the Committee on Development and the relevant European Parliament delegations monitor the findings and recommendations of the final report of the EU EOM and use it as a basis for their political dialogue with Zimbabwe. Specific EP democracy support activities - in line with the presentation of the final EOM report by the Chief Observer and the overall EU strategy towards Zimbabwe - could be envisaged with the country for next year.

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

ELECTION OBSERVATION DELEGATION

HARMONISED ELECTIONS IN ZIMBABWE

30 July 2018

Participants

Members

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**Statement by Mr Norbert Neuser
Chair of the EP election observation delegation
Harmonised elections in Zimbabwe, 30 July 2018**

Harare, 1 August 2018

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am Norbert Neuser, Member of the European Parliament and it is my pleasure to have this opportunity to speak to you on behalf of our Delegation of seven Members of the European Parliament, who come from five countries and represent three political groups. The European Parliament is the only directly-elected body of the EU, representing 500 million European citizens. As such we insist on upholding the highest national, regional and international democratic standards and principles.

We are observing as part of the European Union Election Observation Mission, and we fully align our Delegation with the conclusions of the Mission, led by our colleague, Member of the European Parliament and Chief Observer, Mr Elmar Brok.

These harmonised elections represent considerable progress with contested elections in this country and a significantly more open political space than we saw in the past. Despite this opening of space, however, there have been shortcomings as well. These include an uneven playing field, soft intimidation, misuse of state resources, media bias, lack of transparency, errors in the registration process, concerns over the voters' roll and insufficient

voter education. We noted the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission could have done more to gain people's trust and create a positive perception of the elections.

Having said this, the following remarks will focus on the conduct of election day.

The expectation for democracy was evident on election day with citizens waiting patiently and calmly to cast their vote, thus expressing an unambiguous message of hope in democracy.

The overall conduct which we were able to see inside the polling stations was peaceful and orderly, and we received a friendly welcome from everyone involved. The voting procedure was organised efficiently by electoral officials.

However, we observed several shortcomings, notably insufficient information for voters to identify the correct polling station, which led to confusion and frustration outside polling stations. We have seen some intimidation of voters outside polling stations. We also saw an unusually high number of rejected voters and assisted voting. It was noted that not all polling stations posted the results of the count outside, as required.

The participation of young people in this election is an encouraging sign for Zimbabwe's future. It was also positive to see the prominent engagement of women during these elections. Women's participation should, however, be further enhanced in political life and leadership. Parliamentary quotas are not enough to truly empower women and this should be addressed at all levels of society.

Looking ahead, we call on the government and opposition leaders to be open to dialogue and to appeal to their supporters to remain calm whilst awaiting the official results.

Clear and conclusive results must be announced within the electoral deadline - ensuring transparency and traceability of

counting will strengthen confidence in this step. This is critical and the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission should be fully transparent in the tabulation and publication of results, including a published breakdown of results by polling station.

Possible contestations should be done through legal instruments. It is imperative that the judiciary fulfils its constitutional role of independence.

Finally, these elections are a crucial step - but only a step - in Zimbabwe's political and overall reform. Elections are not an end in themselves, but an important part of a process of change and democratic revival. People have high hopes for the future and, regardless of who wins, it is the duty of political leaders to work to improve the lives of all citizens.

We are well aware that there are no quick solutions, but the EU, including the European Parliament stand ready to support a reform process in Zimbabwe which is inclusive and democratic and works to create a stable and prosperous future for its citizens.

Thank you.



PRESS RELEASES

Improved political climate, but un-level playing field and lack of trust in the process

Improved political climate, inclusive participation rights and a peaceful vote, but un-level playing field, intimidation of voters and lack of trust in the process undermined the pre-election environment. This is how the EUEOM Chief Observer Elmar Brok, Member of the European Parliament, characterized the electoral process up to now. “These elections were seen as a critical test of Zimbabwe’s reform process. In some senses, up to this point, the conduct of the polls has had a number of positive features, but in other senses serious concerns remain. Now we hope for a transparent results process”, said Mr. Brok.

The Chief Observer highlighted the positive election campaign, during which political freedoms were respected. He also highlighted the peaceful and enthusiastic participation of Zimbabweans on Election Day as they exercised their right to vote. But he expressed strong concerns regarding some of the pre-electoral practices, such as intimidation of voters, ZEC’s lack of transparency in preparations, media bias and some problems around polling stations on election day. Mr Brok said: “For Zimbabwe to embrace democracy and move on from the past, such practices must stop”.

Mr Brok stressed: “It is imperative that the results process is credible and transparent, with a full breakdown by polling station so that confidence in the outcome can be assured. It is also imperative for all parties to await the final result and to remain peaceful throughout. The process must be credible and transparent, then whoever wins this election, Zimbabwe can move on, and the people of Zimbabwe can be the real

winners”.

The head of the delegation of the European Parliament, Mr Norbert Neuser, added: “These elections are a crucial step – but only a step – in Zimbabwe’s reform process. Elections are not an end in themselves, but an important part of a process of change. People have high hopes for the future and, regardless of who wins, it is the duty of political leaders to work to improve the lives of all citizens.”

The EU EOM has been present in Zimbabwe since 6 June, with a deployment of a core team in Harare and 44 long-term observers in all of the provinces of the country. On the day of the election the EU had some 140 observers, from all 28 EU Member States, as well as Canada, Norway and Switzerland. The EU Election Observation Mission also included a seven-person delegation from the European Parliament as well as diplomats of EU Member States accredited to Zimbabwe. The EU will follow any legal disputes which may arise. A Final Report will be presented some two months after the end of the electoral process.

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