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## ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK



### PRESS STATEMENT

## COMMENT ON ELECTION ROADMAP TIMELINES

**11 July, 2011-Harare** - This statement is a response to the timelines set and agreed by the three political parties in GNU for Zimbabwe's electoral roadmap as reported in the Herald of 7 July, 2011. First and foremost, the Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) notes with concern the continued disregard of the voice of the people of Zimbabwe as witnessed by the lack of commitment to consult the people in the whole negotiation process.

ZESN is of the view that the timelines that have been set are unrealistic and fail to address a number of pertinent concerns that are essential before the country can hold a new election.

ZESN believes that the 30 days given for voter education and mobilization for voter registration are insufficient as the successful completion of the processes is likely to exceed the set timeline given the many dimensions the processes demand.

ZESN is also concerned with the 60 day timeline given for voter registration and preparation for a new voters' roll and reckon that the timeline must be increased taking into account the number of existing registered voters in excess of 5 million and those of first time voters that would need to be captured. This is compounded by the proposed Electoral Amendments Bill which seeks set up a polling station based voters' roll. The proposed system would necessitate the 're-registration' of all existing voters and allocation to specific polling stations. The time allocated for this process should be cognizant of this, to ensure no eligible voters are excluded. The time and resources required for voters to register also needs to be considered so that the process is not too onerous as to discourage citizens from participating.

It is depressing to note that the parties failed to agree on essential reforms that we believe are fundamental to creating an environment suitable for credible, free and fair elections in Zimbabwe in particular the need for enhancing the independence and resourcing of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC).

ZESN also reiterates the need for security sector reforms as a critical element in paving the way for violence -free election. ZESN is concerned with the fact that security sector reforms remain unresolved yet this is a critical issue on how the elections will be conducted as this will influence its outcome. The early deployment of observers is also essential as it enables them ample time to

assess the situation prevailing in the country. ZESN maintains that an innovative combination of election observation methods should be used to ensure scrutiny of the pre-electoral environment by regional and international observers at least **three months** before and **one month** after the election as a deterrent to politically motivated or electoral violence. ZESN reiterates the need for legal reforms to ensure that repressive legislation is repealed or amended before the next election. The rejection to amend the Public Order and Security Act is unwelcome especially at a time when there is need to allow more freedoms in regards to public gatherings.

Furthermore the basis and interest of the negotiating political parties are unclear as they seem to have disregarded the ongoing constitution reform process which inevitably will bring a number of changes in the electoral process.

ZESN therefore proposes the following as an alternative to tackling the issue of timeframes in the implementation matrix for the negotiators:

- Timely gazetting of polling stations.
- The determination of a mechanism for the type of voters' roll and registration methodology to be used and how this will relate to the proposed polling station based system.
- A clear agreed framework and timeframe for registration of both old and new voters and clean-up of the roll.
- The delimitation of constituencies based on outcome of the new constitution and based on accurate voter registration information as well as the finalization of the voters' roll.
- Voter education and mobilization needs to be a continuous part of the entire process.
- A constitutionally stipulated election period to avoid uncertainty on election dates.

ZESN stresses that the roadmap needs to create an enabling environment for free and fair elections. Setting unrealistic timelines will likely result in another disputed election. The constitution reform process needs to be completed first. The roadmap should promote transparency in all electoral processes and critically deal with issues that have hindered credible elections in the past. SADC needs to take an active role and urge the political parties to commit to the letter and spirit of the roadmap once it has been signed. ZESN emphasises on the need to instill confidence in the electorate and the creation of enabling environment for the holding of credible elections that reflect the will of the people of Zimbabwe. **Ends//**

**PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS IN ZIMBABWE**  
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