



1 June 2023

## **STATEMENT: PROCLAMATION OF THE 23 AUGUST HARMONISED ELECTIONS**

The Election Resource Centre takes note of the declaration made by His Excellency President ED Mnangagwa declaring 23 August 2023 as the date for this year's harmonised elections in accordance with statutory and constitutional provisions establishing electoral timelines. The ERC would like to clarify the following issues:

### **Electoral Amendment Bill**

According to section 157 (5) of the Constitution, after an election has been called, no change to the Electoral Law or to any other law relating to elections has effect for the purpose of that election. Therefore, the proposed amendments in the current Bill and any future attempts through Bills, Statutory Instruments and Presidential Powers Act to amend will not have an effect on the 2023 Harmonised Election.

The proclamation ends a period of hope that began following the 2018 Harmonised Election where political parties, CSO's and Election Observer Missions had made recommendations for reform following the elections, which were continually ignored. Electoral reforms were necessary to restore trust in Zimbabwe's electoral processes.

### **Composition of Parliament - Women & Youth Quota**

While the proposed Amendments in the Electoral Amendment Bill will not be applicable to the current election, Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 2) Act, 2021 extended the 60 proportional representation seats reserved for women and added an additional 10 proportional representation seats for youth.

Therefore, the women's and youth quota will be implemented based on section 124 of the Constitution, with the Commission expected to provide the prescribed format in which the nominations for the youth quota will take place.

Additionally, as Zimbabwe heads for this critical election, the ERC urges the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) and other relevant stakeholders to address the following issues that have the potential of affecting the credibility of the elections, if not addressed.

### **Access to the Voters Roll**

The Commission has on numerous and critical occasions declined to grant stakeholders access to the electronic copy of the voters' roll, citing concerns around alleged tampering. In pursuant to the provisions of s 21 of the Electoral Act, the ERC urges the Commission to avail the electronic copy of the voters' roll ahead of the election as this will help enhance stakeholder confidence in the electoral process.

### **Voters Roll Inspection**

The ERC also notes concerns raised by citizens during the Voter Roll Inspection process. There are bona fide registered voters, some who voted in 2018, who are not able to verify their registration status and therefore run the risk of unconstitutionally being denied their right to vote. These issues require serious attention to avoid disenfranchising voters.

### **Alteration to the Voters Roll**

The ERC further notes that alterations have been made to voters' polling stations following the delimitation process. Considering the alterations made to voters' polling stations, the Commission must publish the list of alterations and/or changes made to registered voters' polling stations in line with section 36 of the Electoral Act to enhance transparency of the electoral process. The failure to inform voters of the changes to polling stations or publish lists of the changes has the potential to disenfranchise affected voters on election day.

### **For comments and further details**

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