

# Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN)



## ***ZESN News Flash***

### **ZESN TO FIELD 11800 OBSERVERS**

13 March 2008 – Harare: Today the Minister of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs gave the Zimbabwe Election Support Network a letter of invitation for accreditation of its 11800 observers. Of the few who were not invited, ZESN noted that there were no identity numbers against their names or their identity numbers had no check letters. The organisation anticipates that at least 95% of its invited observers will turn up accreditation which is taking place in Harare and Bulawayo in spite of the communication and transport challenges that are prevailing in the country.

ZESN welcomes this development and wishes to inform its members that they need to check with its secretariat first before they go for accreditation or follow the schedule that will be circulated in due course.

ZESN therefore reminds its members and other stakeholders that election observation is an important part of any electoral process and it encourages an election process that is fair and free from fraud or intimidation, and which the voters believe is legitimate.

Specifically, election observation can serve the following purposes:

- To assess the electoral process: by measuring the relative freeness and fairness of elections according to widely accepted international standards.
- To establish whether electoral laws are understood by election officials, political contestants and the public and are not manipulated by any of the stakeholders.
- To deter electoral law violations and observers can report any irregularities.
- To promote confidence and security to the electorate and the public during the election period.
- To reduce levels of violence, intimidation, fear and political tension through the mere presence of observers.
- It improves the conditions for free and fair elections by promoting learning from accumulated experience.
- The observer's assessment of the process can assist in the development of adequate electoral laws and procedures through electoral reform.
- It can lead to an increase in government electoral budgets and cross-country exchanges, all of which may bring about the improvement of future electoral processes.
- It also assists in breaking cultural shackles that have traditionally excluded the marginalised from their rightful participation in the electoral process.

In addition an observer is an individual with an understanding of the electoral law and regulations, who agrees to be an impartial witness of the entire polling process with the objective of ensuring that all relevant electoral legislation, regulations, and codes of conduct are obeyed.

Because these observers are impartial they provide timely and reliable information on the polling day activities. Collectively, the reports submitted by local observers enable sound and substantiated conclusions to be made regarding the quality of the electoral process and the final results of the elections.

**ZESN also re-emphasizes that its observers should;**

- To know, understand and comply with the electoral law and regulations of Zimbabwe.
- To observe all phases of the electoral process at a polling station on polling day from the setting up of the polling station to the affixing of election results outside the polling station
- To note down complaints concerning conduct prejudicial to free and fair elections or alleged infringements of the Electoral Law and any codes developed and report them to ZESN authorities
- To obtain any information that they consider necessary about the processes of voting, vote counting and tabulation of votes.
- To ensure the secrecy of the ballot
- To establish whether the election officials execute election related duties impartially
- To inspect ballot boxes and materials such as registration, voter's rolls, voting booths and other materials used during the voting process. Ends//

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