



**AFRICAN UNION AND THE COMMON MARKET FOR EASTERN AND SOUTHERN
AFRICA ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION TO THE
23 AUGUST 2023 HARMONISED ELECTIONS IN ZIMBABWE**

PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

HARARE, 25 AUGUST 2023

A. INTRODUCTION

Following the invitation by the Government of the Republic of Zimbabwe to observe the 23 August 2023 Harmonised elections, the African Union (AU) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) deployed a Short-Term Election Observation Mission from 16 to 29 August 2023. The Mission comprises of eighty-two (82) short-term observers (STOs) from twenty-nine (29) countries across Africa and is led by His Excellency Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, former President of the Republic of Nigeria, deputised by Rt. Hon. Dr. Ruhakana Rugunda, former Prime Minister of the Republic of Uganda and a member of the COMESA Committee of Elders. They were supported by H.E. Domitien Ndayizeye, former President of the Republic of Burundi and Chairperson of the African Union Panel of the Wise; His Excellency Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security and Her Excellency Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe, Secretary General of COMESA.

The joint AU-COMESA Election Observation Mission (EOM) was preceded by the deployment of a joint technical Pre-election Assessment Mission from 3 to 7 July 2023. The Mission assessed the pre-election environment and general level of preparedness for various election stakeholders.

The findings of the pre-election assessment guided the deployment of the STOs and stakeholder engagements.

The objectives of the joint AU-COMESA Mission were two-fold: first, to assess the technical compliance of the 2023 electoral process in line with AU and COMESA principles and normative frameworks and other international obligations and standards for democratic elections, as well as Zimbabwe's national legal framework; secondly, to ascertain that the environment was peaceful for the conduct of democratic elections and acceptance of the electoral outcome.

The Mission held a technical briefing for the observers to orient them on the context and preparations for the elections and observation methodology before deployment to the 10 provinces of Zimbabwe.

This statement represents the Mission's preliminary findings and assessment of the conduct of the 23 August 2023 harmonised elections. It is issued while tallying and announcement of provisional election results are still ongoing. Therefore, this is not an overall or final assessment of the electoral process. The Mission will continue to observe the immediate post-election environment, including the results management process and resolution of electoral disputes, and may issue another statement on the pending operations. The Mission will issue a final report which will provide comprehensive findings and recommendations for improvement of future elections in Zimbabwe, two months after the conclusion of the electoral process.

B. PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

(i) Political Context of the Elections

The 2023 Harmonized Elections are the fifth in the country's electoral history and the second to be conducted after the 2017 transition. The Elections are coming at a time of renewed interest on Zimbabwe with a number of foreign organisations and countries making efforts to re-engage the country.

The context is also characterised by socio-political tensions around the enactment of the Criminal Law Codification and Reform Amendment Act (Patriotic Act), and the Private Voluntary Organisations Amendment Bill which is awaiting presidential assent. Notwithstanding, there was a reduction in levels of political violence compared to previous elections.

(ii) Legal Framework

The legal framework governing the conduct of the 2023 harmonised elections comprises of the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment Act, 2023; The Electoral Act (Chapter 2:13) and various Regulations.

Other substantive and operational laws including provisions and procedures for contesting elections and determination of election petitions are exemplified in the Constitutional Court Act, Constitutional Court Rules, Supreme Court Act, Supreme Court Rules, High Court Act, High Court Rules and the Electoral Court Rules.

The Mission also noted that Zimbabwe has taken important steps in aligning its legal framework with international and regional obligations. The Mission commends Zimbabwe for ratifying the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance.¹

(iii) Electoral System

Zimbabwe operates a hybrid electoral system that combines the First-Past-the-Post system and the Proportional Representation system- a multi-party electoral system.

The First-Past-the-Post system is adopted for elections for the lower house of Parliament (the National Assembly) and for local authority elections.

The Proportional Representation system applies for the selection of 60 members of the Senate, 60 members of the National Assembly all of whom must be women and for the Provincial Councils in the eight (8) non-metropolitan provinces. The Electoral Act provides for detailed formula² for allocation of seats to eligible parties. To qualify, a party must have filed its party nominations list during the nomination court proceedings otherwise it loses eligibility for seat allocation.

¹ The ratification is in line with previous recommendations from the AUEOM's 2018 final report.

² The Eight Schedule (Section 45C (5) and 451(1)) of the Electoral Act lays down detailed description of proportional representation formula.

(iv) Election Management

Article 239 stipulates the functions of Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, namely, to conduct and supervise elections to the office of President and to Parliament; elections to provincial and metropolitan councils and the governing bodies of Local Authorities and elections of members of the National Council of Chiefs established by Section 285.

In accordance with the Electoral Act (Chapter 2:13), Zimbabwe Electoral Commission appointed and published the names of the National Assembly and Presidential Constituency Elections Officers, General Notice 1131 of 2023. Polling officials were drawn from the secretariat and seconded civil servants. Concerns were raised that some officials were seconded from the army and hence the impartiality of the polling officials was questioned.

The Mission noted the establishment of an observer accreditation committee tasked with the responsibility of considering and approving applications for accreditation from individuals, institutions and organisations. Accreditation of observers commenced on 20 June 2023.

The Mission noted confirmation by Zimbabwe Electoral Commission that the government provided the entire budget for the elections as requested and a National Logistics Committee was established to streamline election logistics. On 21 August 2023, ZEC reported that 98% of all preparation were done and election materials had already been delivered to the polling areas. However, on election day, the Mission observed late opening of some polling stations. The delay was attributed to late delivery of ballot papers for the local authority elections. The Mission further noted that there seemed to have been a gap in timely communication of the situation to relevant stakeholders especially political parties and candidates which led to speculations and anxiety amongst the political players.

(v) Delimitation

The Constitution of Zimbabwe in sections 160 (1) and (2) provides for the number of constituencies and wards while section 161 outlines the delimitation process. The Electoral Act provides further guidance on the process and the factors to be considered.

The boundaries delimitation process started in 2021 and was concluded on 21 February 2023 with the gazette of the final delimitation report. The report was however challenged in court, but the Constitutional Court of Zimbabwe dismissed the case. The 2023 Harmonised Elections are being conducted in the 210 constituencies and 1970 wards based on the new constituency and ward boundaries.

The Mission's interactions with civic and political actors revealed that concerns persist regarding the process and outcome of the delimitation exercise. These included: allegations of inadequate consultation with stakeholders despite assertion by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission that there were consultations at all levels; use of inaccurate population figures; gerrymandering in some areas to produce pre-determined election results; and limited civic education on the delimitation.

(vi) Voter Registration

Section 17A of the Electoral Act (Chapter 2:13) provides for the conduct of continuous voter registration by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission. In addition, the Commission periodically conducts enhanced voter registration where additional voter registration centres are opened for defined periods of time. To be eligible to vote in an election, a person must be a Zimbabwean citizen of at least 18 years old, in possession of either a national identity card or a valid Zimbabwean passport and have his/her details as proof of residence.

For the 2023 Harmonised Elections, the Mission noted that the Commission conducted three phases of enhanced voter registration from 1 to 28 February 2022, 11 to 30 April 2022 and 12 to 26 March 2023. The total number of registered voters is 6,623,511.

The provisional voters' roll was displayed for public inspection from 27 to 31 May 2023. Additionally, voters could verify their registration status on their mobile phones using USSD code *265# or through the Commission's website. However, there were concerns raised by some stakeholders and voters on election day that the USSD code was not always working.

The Mission takes note of the Commission's efforts to reach out and register as many eligible voters as possible. This effort was appreciated by some stakeholders the Mission interacted with but also raised some issues of concern as follows:

- a. That many potential eligible voters were left out due to lack of National Registration Cards which is one of the requirements for registration as a voter. They claimed that the process of obtaining the National Identity cards was not transparent in some areas in the country.
- b. Failure to open the review of the voters' roll to political parties as a confidence building measure.
- c. The limited time of only five days allocated to voters to check their registration status.
- d. Late release of the voters' roll to political parties, candidates and other interested stakeholders.
- e. High fees required to be paid for those wishing to obtain a copy of the voters' roll.
- f. Limited communication by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission to its stakeholders regarding the process and state of the voters' roll.

(vii) Civic and Voter Education

Chapter 12: Section 239 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe mandates the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission to conduct, supervise and accredit voter education service providers. The Mission acknowledges the importance of civic and voter education to conscientise citizens to understand their rights, roles and obligations in the electoral process and commends the efforts made by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission through mainstream media and social media to reach out and urge citizens to register and participate in the elections.

However, the Mission noted the concerns from stakeholders, particularly civil society organisations, concerning the delay in accreditation for voter education. Most

organisations received their accreditation certificates which are valid for one year in August 2023, just a few weeks before elections. As a result, civil society organisations could not fundraise to conduct meaningful voter education.

(viii) Political Party Registration and Candidate Nomination

Following President Mnangagwa's proclamation (4 of 2021) on the election date, the Nomination Court on 21 June 2023 approved 5,565 candidates for the 23 August Harmonised Elections. Eleven candidates were approved for the presidential election, 637 candidates from 14 political parties and 67 independent candidates for the National Assembly election, and 4,816 candidates from 42 political parties and 272 independent candidates for the local authority elections, of which 91 are contesting unopposed.

The Mission noted the concerns raised by stakeholders on the high increase of nomination fees for all levels of elections, the highest being for presidential nomination that was raised from USD 1,000 to USD 20,000. This high increase disenfranchises eligible contenders particularly from underrepresented groups.

The Mission further noted the nullification by the Zimbabwe High Court of the candidacy of one of the prospective presidential contenders and the withdrawal of the Movement for Democratic Change - T presidential candidate, though his name still appeared on the ballot in compliance with section 107 of the Electoral Act.

(ix) Election campaigns

Statutory Instrument 85 of 2023 on 31 May 2023, contained Proclamation 4 of 2023 setting 23 August 2023, as the day of Zimbabwe's Harmonised Elections. Campaigns began from the day of proclamation up to 24 hours before voting as contained in Section 9(1) of the Fourth Schedule (Section 160A) of the Electoral Act.

Political parties, candidates, election agents and supporters are required to abide by the Electoral Code of Conduct for Political Parties and Candidates as contained in the Fourth Schedule of the Electoral Act. A political party or candidate can hold a campaign in public within the period subject to them notifying the responsible local authority and the police in charge of the area of the time and venue of the campaign. While the Mission appreciates the largely peaceful campaigns, some stakeholders consulted highlighted serious concerns regarding the enacted Maintenance of Peace and Order Act that repealed the Public Order and Security Act. Stakeholders reported that the new Act was being used to violate some of the fundamental freedoms. Opposition political parties and candidates that were consulted highlighted the selective and disproportionate application of the Maintenance of Peace and Order Act by the Zimbabwe Republic Police to limit large-scale campaign rallies by the opposition.

(x) Inclusion in Electoral Processes

(a) Gender

The Constitution and the Electoral Act provide the framework for the exercise and protection of Zimbabwean women's political rights to participation and representation in line with international and regional benchmarks. Specifically, Section 56 of the

Constitution guarantees the fundamental principle of gender equality and non-discrimination while Section 57 safeguards women's right to vote and to stand for election for public office. Furthermore, Section 3 of the Electoral Act upholds the right to every citizen to participate in government directly or through freely chosen representatives without distinction on the ground of gender.

The women's quota in Parliament, adopted in 2013 and set to expire in 2023, was extended by two more electoral cycles. The extension of the women quota is highly commendable. This positive step is in line with the spirit of the recommendation of the 2018 AUEOM report on the need to put in place mechanisms to increase women's participation as candidates in the elections.

Out of eleven (11) presidential candidates, only one woman vied for the presidency compared to the four (4) female presidential hopefuls in the 2018 elections. Women representation in parliamentary elections stands at 11% out of a total of seven hundred and four (704) candidates and at 14% out of five thousand and eighty-eight (5,088) local authority elections. Notwithstanding the affirmative action, the 2023 election recorded a lower number of female candidates compared to the 2018 elections, which witnessed the participation of 14.4% female parliamentary election candidates and 17% female local authority election candidates.

Reduction in the number of female contestants has been attributed by stakeholders to the high nomination fee for presidential candidates and low political representation of women in political parties' hierarchy.

The low participation of women as candidates, undermines Zimbabwe's constitutional aspiration and international/regional commitment towards gender equality. Reported cases of gender-based violence on social media were brought to the attention of the Mission by some stakeholders.

(b) Youth

Section 20 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe provides for effective political participation of youth. The Mission commends Zimbabwe for the adoption of a youth quota in the elective National Assembly. This affirmative action for increased youth representation in political governance is in line with its constitutional requirement and the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance.

(c) People Living with Disabilities

Section 56 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe guarantees the right of every person to equal treatment and non-discrimination based on disability.

The Mission regrettably noted that the number of senatorial seats allocated to persons living with disabilities remains unchanged since the 2018 elections despite renewed calls made by organisations advocating for increased political representation of persons living with disabilities in decision-making bodies.

(xi) The Media Environment

Section 61 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe guarantees freedom of expression and media as well as access to information. Media stakeholders such as the Zimbabwean chapter of the Media Institute of Southern Africa, claim that the regulatory environment in the country continues to be defined by restrictive and inhibitive media policies and laws even years after the adoption of the 2013 Constitution, which contains a universally acceptable Bill of Rights, with no meaningful shift in the country's statutory media regulation legislation and policies to make these constitutional gains a reality.

Furthermore, while public broadcasters shall afford all political parties and independent candidates contesting an election free access to their broadcasting services as may be prescribed, as provided for in Section 160G of the Electoral Act, some stakeholders the Mission interacted with however, raised concerns about unequal access to State broadcasters.

(xii) Security Context

The management of security during election is guided by the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment Act, 2023; the Maintenance of Peace and Order Act, 2019; the Police Act and the Electoral Amendment Act and regulations.

The Mission noted that the security environment ahead of the 2023 Harmonised Elections remained largely peaceful and calm. The majority of stakeholders the Mission interacted with noted a significant reduction in violence compared to previous elections.

Section 219 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe clearly lays out the functions of the Police Service whilst part II of the Maintenance of Peace and Order Act regulates the management of public gatherings by the Police Service. The Mission noted the positive security preparations for the elections. This includes establishing a specialised unit for the Harmonized Elections and the development of a booklet on the Code of Conduct for its Officers during elections. In addition, the Zimbabwe Republic Police leadership reported that deployments of police officers and prison officers (to complement the Police) were adequate, between three to five per polling station. Special support units were deployed throughout to manage any potential unrests.

The signing of peace pledges by political parties was noted as very important for the political environment. Furthermore, the Mission noted constant peace messaging by President Mnangagwa which enhanced confidence that the 23 August elections would be peaceful.

The Mission noted the concerns of stakeholders on the presence of Forever Associates Zimbabwe. The group is accused of intimidating citizens especially in the rural areas to vote in a particular way. The existence of the group was confirmed by the Zimbabwe Republic Police.

(xiii) The Role of Civil Society Organisations

The Mission appreciates the role of Civil Society Organisations and takes note of the achievements they have made so far. They have been instrumental in advancing peace

messages, providing voter education despite the challenges of delayed accreditation and conducting local election observation.

The Mission noted the concerns expressed by civil society organisations on the far-reaching implications of the Criminal Law Codification and Reform Amendment Act (Patriotic Act) in reducing the democratic space so far gained.

Despite the challenges expressed regarding accreditation, the Mission noted that three thousand five hundred and seventy-two (3,572) local observers were accredited for the 2023 Harmonised Elections. The accreditation fee of USD10 for each observer and requirement to appear in person at the accreditation centres were noted as impeding factors on the number of observers civil society organisations could deploy hence reducing their capacity in playing a meaningful role in democratic consolidation in Zimbabwe.

The Mission is deeply concerned about the arrest of civil society actors and the confiscation of computers and documents from the Election Resource Centre and Zimbabwe Election Support Network. The Mission recommends that investigations are expedited within the legal provisions.

(xiv) Electoral Dispute Resolution

In Zimbabwe, electoral disputes are mainly arbitrated in the different courts as provided for in the legal instruments governing elections. The Mission noted that an alternative dispute resolution mechanism has been established through the Multiparty Liaison Committees at the national, provincial and constituency levels.

The Committees were established to handle electoral disputes that might arise in line with Section 160 B of the Electoral Act and are chaired by Zimbabwe Electoral Commission. Presidential candidates' disputes are handled by the national multiparty liaison committees. However, some stakeholders reported that since inauguration, the Committees have largely remained inactive.

Other initiatives included setting up of a Media Monitoring Committee to monitor media conduct and compliance with the Electoral Act and appointment of special police liaison officers to investigate cases related to electoral violence. Each of the 10 provinces was assigned two special police liaison officers.

C. ELECTION DAY OBSERVATION

The AU-COMESA EOM deployed 33 Short-Term Observer teams in the 10 provinces across the country where they observed opening, voting, closing, and counting procedures on 23 August 2023. This statement also reflects preliminary findings made by observer teams in selected wards where voting was extended till 24 August 2023. The Mission visited a total of five hundred and sixty-six (566) polling stations of which 75% (424) were in urban and 25% (142) in rural areas.

a. Polling Atmosphere

The AU-COMESA EOM noted that the atmosphere on Election Day was generally peaceful and calm with no incidents of violence witnessed. Although long queues were observed up to mid-afternoon of day one of voting, they were largely orderly, except in a few isolated cases where the crowds became agitated because of delays in opening of polling stations, particularly in Harare and Bulawayo.

b. Accessibility of Polling Stations

The AU-COMESA EOM noted that 94% of polling stations visited were easily accessible to all the voters. Accessibility was challenged in a few instances where polling station ground was not levelled appropriately, and crowds obstructed the entrance.

c. Opening of polling

The AU-COMESA EOM observed opening procedures at 35 polling stations across all the 10 provinces. The Mission noted that 81% of these polling stations visited opened at 07h00, the legally stipulated time.

There were queues in 97% of polling stations visited before and during the opening of the polls on the morning of 23 August.

The Mission noted delays in opening of polling stations, particularly in Harare and Bulawayo, which was largely due to delays in the distribution of local authority ballots. This was confirmed by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission in its statement on 23 August. It was observed that 65% of the polling stations visited opened on time while 35% opened late.

d. Polling Staff

The AU-COMESA observer teams noted an average of eight polling staff in every station including, the presiding officer. In all polling stations visited, the polling staff demonstrated adequate levels of professionalism, competence, understanding of their roles and responsibilities, adherence to procedures and a sense of commitment.

e. Polling Procedures

There was no campaign material or campaigning near the polling stations visited by the AU-COMESA EOM.

Priority was given to voters, including the elderly, persons with disabilities and expectant and nursing mothers, and assistance was also provided to voters who required such support in all the stations visited.

Observer teams witnessed some voters being turned away in 30% of stations visited, and in most cases, this was either because of not having the correct voter identification or voters presenting themselves at the wrong polling station. In such cases, observers confirmed that most voters were re-directed to the right polling station.

The Mission noted that voting proceeded uninterrupted in all the polling stations visited throughout day one of voting.

The secrecy of the vote was guaranteed by the appropriate lay-out of all polling stations visited which ensured the privacy of the ballot. The Mission also noted that postal ballots were opened, verified, and stamped by the presiding officer which could have compromised the secrecy of the ballot.

f. Political Party/Candidate Agents and Observers

There was systematic presence of party agents in all the stations visited. ZANU-PF and CCC were represented in all the stations observed by the Mission. Representation of independent candidate agents was also noted in certain polling stations observed.

The AU-COMESA EOM noted that international observation groups and local observers were granted access to all polling stations visited. In a few stations visited, the Mission also noted the presence of Forever Associates Zimbabwe which in certain cases led to confrontations with the voters. Regrettably, the Mission was informed of the Zimbabwe Republic Police raid on the Zimbabwe Electoral Support Network offices in Harare, seizure of election-related equipment and the arrest of leaders of the Network and the Election Resource Centre. The Mission is concerned about such actions which have the potential of undermining the peace and integrity of the ongoing process.

g. Participation of Women

The AU-COMESA EOM noted the high participation of women on election day. Women were represented as election officials (72%), political party and candidate agents (54%), and local observers (51%) in all polling stations visited. The Mission also observed the strong presence of women as voters and security agents.

h. Security Agents

A visible presence of security personnel was noted inside and outside all the polling stations visited from opening to closing of day one of the polls. Their presence was observed to be non-intrusive and professional in all the stations visited by the Mission.

i. Closing of Polls and Counting

The AU-COMESA Mission observed the closing process in 28 polling stations, 86% being in urban areas and 14% in rural areas.

The Mission observed that 75% of polling stations visited closed at 19h00, the legally stipulated time. The Mission also observed that polling stations that opened late made up for the delays in line with the law, which prescribes that voting must carry on for twelve (12) hours. The Mission was pleased that the Electoral Commission reaffirmed, in a press communiqué, its commitment to comply with the regulation and to ensuring that affected voters were granted the opportunity to exercise their constitutional right to vote. The Mission observed that there were voters in the queues at the closing of polls in certain polling stations visited on 23 August. All voters in the queue at the closing time were allowed to cast their vote.

The Mission was also informed that polling stations that opened late made up for the delays in line with the law, which prescribes that voting must carry on for twelve (12) hours. The Mission was pleased that the electoral commission reaffirmed, in a press communiqué, its commitment to comply with the regulation and to ensuring that affected voters were granted the opportunity to exercise their constitutional right to vote.

All the necessary documentation was completed, and results were posted at the polling stations visited. The AU-COMESA Mission was informed of a proclamation, issued in the evening of 23 August, which extended voting till 24 August in the wards affected by late distribution of ballots. The Mission was also informed that voting would run on 24 August from 8h00 to 16h00. The Mission is of the view that the extension of voting is a positive measure that sought to safeguard the right of vote of all affected voters, including those who may have been disenfranchised as a result of the long wait on day one of voting.

D. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on its findings, the Mission offers the following preliminary recommendations for consideration in improving future electoral processes in Zimbabwe:

To the Government and Legislators

1. Expedite the resolution of the emerging issue relating to the arrest and detention of some civil society actors within the merits of the law.
2. Exempt local observers from paying accreditation fee in line with international best practices.
3. Review the legal framework to increase representation of persons living with disabilities in elective positions.
4. Revise the legal framework to include binding provisions that compel political parties to increase representation of women on National Assembly candidate lists.
5. Domesticated, implement, and report on the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance.

To the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission:

1. Enhance the enforcement of the electoral code of conduct to address issues related to intimidation of voters by political party affiliates.
2. Open the review of the voters' roll to political parties as a way of building confidence among the stakeholders.
3. Consider making the election calendar flexible to accommodate emerging issues, including court cases, and communicate the same to electoral stakeholders in a timely manner.
4. Provide regular updates to the public throughout the electoral process, particularly on election day.
5. Ensure effective communication between the Commission's headquarters and polling officials to help address any emerging issues, including logistics on election day.
6. Review the procedures on postal voting to enhance the secrecy and transparency.
7. Recruit polling officials outside of civil service and the army since they are perceived to be pro-government.

8. Finalise of the voters' roll on time and avail it to stakeholders in line with the provisions of the Electoral Act in order to enhance transparency.
9. Accredite Civil Society Organisation on time to provide voter education throughout the entire electoral cycle.
10. Further decentralise the accreditation process for local observers.
11. Ensure that polling stations are accessible to persons living with disabilities and the elderly.
12. Match the colour of the lid of the ballot boxes with the colour of ballot papers to speed up the voting process and avoid stray ballots.

To Political Parties:

1. Ensure that political party supporters and candidates abide by the electoral code of conduct.
2. Strengthen internal party democracy to promote more inclusive and competitive selection of candidates during primaries.
3. Implement internal voluntary gender quotas to strengthen the role of women, youth, and persons living with disabilities in political party leadership positions towards increased representation in national and local elections.
4. Stop political activities of affiliates on election day.

To Civil Society Organisations:

1. Continue advocating for key legal and electoral reforms, including participation in elections.
2. Promote increased participation of women, youth and persons living with disabilities in elective bodies and leadership positions in political parties.
3. Further promote transparency, and accountability in the management of the electoral process to deepen democratic credentials of Zimbabwe.

E. CONCLUSION

The AU-COMESA EOM observed that the 2023 Harmonised Elections were conducted, up to the counting process, in a generally peaceful and transparent manner despite logistical challenges with the availability and distribution of local authority ballot papers in some areas. The Mission continues to observe the tallying process and will issue a comprehensive report within two months.

The AU-COMESA EOM commends the people of Zimbabwe for their patience, resilience, and commitment to express their will at the polls.

As the country awaits the announcement of results by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, the Mission urges all stakeholders to remain committed to the rule of law and democratic principles until the conclusion of the process. The Mission further encourages any aggrieved party to use legally established channels to seek recourse.

Issued in Harare, Zimbabwe on 25th August, 2023

His Excellency Goodluck Jonathan
Head of AU-COMESA Election Observation Mission
(Former President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria)