



ZEC CHAIRPERSON'S BRIEF TO DIPLOMATS ACCREDITED TO ZIMBABWE

DATE: 10 FEBRUARY 2022

TIME: 1100HRS

Salutations

Your Excellences here present

ZEC Commissioners

Cooperating partners

Ladies and Gentlemen

The purpose of this brief is to give you an update on the current mobile voter registration exercise and the impending by-elections.

Mobile Voter Registration for Delimitation

The mobile voter registration for the impending delimitation exercise, which was initially pencilled for early December last year commenced on 1 February 2022. The exercise will be held in two phases as follows:

Phase 1: This will run from 1 February 2022 to 28 February 2022.

The areas to be covered under **phase 1** can be accessed on the Commission website www.zec.org.zw. These mobile voter registration centres were also published in the country's four daily newspapers on 25 January 2022.

The Commission has established **210 voter registration teams** to cater for the **210 constituencies**, in addition to the 63 District and 10 Provincial office centres. These teams are mobile and will be deployed at the advertised registration centres for periods ranging from 1-3 days before moving on to the next registration centre within the constituencies.

The teams are expected to cover a combined total of **2,713** centres during the first phase. This has been done to ensure that the Commission registers as many potential registrants as possible by bringing the voter registration centres close to the people.

Voter education teams are informing prospective registrants of when the registration teams will be in their respective areas and the registration centres where the teams will be operating from. Members of the public are being urged to be on the lookout for these voter educators for this information. Members of the public are also being urged to listen for information on the radio, television, ZEC social media platforms as these will also be used as platforms to dispatch information on the mobile voter registration exercise.

Phase 2: This will be conducted from **11 to 30 April 2022** and will follow the same modus operandi as the first phase.

It should be noted that this mobile voter registration exercise is not meant for the upcoming by-elections whose voters' rolls are already closed but for the delimitation exercise expected to be conducted after the national population census.

Multiple entries

The Commission is always reminding members of the public who have been registered before under the Biometric Voter Registration exercise not to register again since their names are already on the voters' roll. If one is not sure of their registration status, they can check on-line on bvrinspection@zec.org.zw or on the Commission's website www.zec.org.zw

Those intending to transfer should inform the voter registration officer of their intention rather than register as new registrants. The Commission's voter registration officers have been ordered to ask the prospective registrant's intentions.

Civil Society Organisations and political parties are advised to desist from giving voter registration incentives as this may entice those already on the voters' roll to register multiple times. They are also urged to inform prospective registrants that they do not need to register again if they are already on the voters' roll.

For instance, on 8 February 2022, the BVR machines in the field connected on line recorded more than 70 people trying to register for the second time. Duplicate entries are most likely higher than this figure since not all BVR machines are on line due to lack of connectivity in some areas.

Although multiple registrations are eventually picked by the Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS), the practice gives an outward false impression of the actual numbers registered and has some cost implications on the Commission.

Voter Registration Statistics

Voter registration figures were subdued at the beginning of the exercise, with some provinces such as Matabeleland North recording as low as 42 people on the first day. However, the exercise is now gathering momentum as shown by increasing daily figures.

As at 8 February 2022 the total cumulative daily records captured in the field amounted to **14860** people. Of these **8,041** are male while **6,819** are female.

It is important to note that when one has gone through the voter registration process and is given a slip, it does not mean that they are already on the voters' roll.

The Commission's BVR machines are not on line hence data recorded by the individual machines in the field is collated manually and uploaded at district centres for on-line transmission to the Automated Finger Print Identification System to remove duplicates.

The entries are then incorporated on the national voters' roll. This means that voter registration statistics recorded in the field do not necessarily reflect the actual entries that are finally added to the voters' roll.

New entries to the voters' roll

The Commission will share with everyone the actual numbers added on to the voters' roll when the exercise has been completed. Right now, figures of those people recorded by the BVR machines in the field are the only ones that are available. You may appreciate that the Commission is also removing deceased voters from the voters' roll hence the final figure of new registrants will be available in due course.

Voter Education and Publicity

The Commission would like to see more people being registered and that is the reason why it postponed the mobile voter registration exercise which was previously pencilled for early December. The intention was to enable more people to acquire national identity cards required for the voter registration exercise.

The Commission hopes that those who did not have identity cards took that opportunity to acquire the documents. Those above the age of 18 years who currently don't have identity cards and wish to register during the mobile voter registration exercise must acquire them between now and the second phase of the exercise.

In view of the subdued voter registration statistics, the Commission has stepped up its voter education drive and publicity programmes to ensure that the public is aware of this voter registration exercise.

Besides deploying personnel on the ground to conduct voter education on the voter registration exercise, the Commission broadcasts programmes on Radio Zimbabwe and Classic 263 national radio stations providing information on voter registration. In addition, the Commission also has similar programmes on Hevoi FM in Masvingo, Nyaminyami FM in Kariba, Diamond FM in Mutare, YA FM in Zvishavane and Breeze FM in Victoria Falls.

The Commission is also very active on Twitter and Facebook as an effort to reach out to every stakeholder.

To complement these efforts, the Commission has decentralised stakeholder engagements to provincial level where all current electoral activities are discussed at least once a month.

Voter registration requirements

ZEC reiterates that for one to qualify for registration he or she must:

- be a Zimbabwean citizen
- be of or over the age of eighteen years; and
- be resident in any ward and produces proof of such residency

and must present to the voter registration officer necessary documentation to prove their identity and residency, that is:

- National identity card (plastic, metal or paper waiting pass with the holder's photograph) or a valid passport
- Proof of residence in the form of utility bills, hospital cards, credit letters, affidavits, etc.

Deployment

1,885 voter education and voter registration personnel have been recruited and deployed in the field. This personnel was provided by the Public Service Commission and other statutory bodies as outlined by the law.

The voter educators and registration teams will continue with their work up to the end of the first phase of the mobile voter registration exercise on 28 February 2022.

Funding

The Commission has presented an estimated budget of **ZWL 4.5 billion** for the mobile voter registration exercise which Treasury is already funding.

Challenges

The incessant heavy rains, which have caused flooding in low-lying areas have created some challenges in terms of personnel and equipment deployment in certain areas. Flooding has been experienced in the Chimanimani, Muzarabani, Mudzi, Chipinge, Chikombedzi and Beitbridge areas just to name a few.

This has resulted in rescheduling and relocation of a few voter registration centres. These are Gokwe where two voter registration centres had become inaccessible hence, two more centres were established on the other side. Another additional centre had to be established in Rushinga to allow prospective registrants who had been cut off by floods from the previously established voter registration centre to register. In both cases, the affected communities have been informed about the new developments.

The Commission prioritises the safety of all stakeholders involved in the voter registration exercise hence the adjustments to the previously announced itinerary.

BY-ELECTIONS

Preparations

Preparations are on course for the conduct of by-elections on 26 March 2022. The estimated budget for the by-election is **ZWL 3.7 billion**.

All constituencies and wards, with the exception of ward 14 of Umguza Rural District Council, are contested. No nomination court sat for Ward 3 of Bulawayo Municipality which was initially advertised as vacant after the Town clerk notified ZEC of the cancellation of the vacancy.

In ward 14 of Umguza RDC **Ncube Delay** from ZANU PF Party was the only successful candidate to lodge his nomination papers and was duly elected as the councillor for that ward with effect from 26 January 2022.

The Commission has since received two more vacancies for ward 20 of Chitungwiza Municipality and ward 3 of Gokwe North Rural District Council. The nomination court for the two will sit on 22 February 2022 and polling will also be conducted on 26 March 2022 if it becomes necessary.

Results of the nomination courts that sat on 26 and 28 February 2022 were published in the press of 04 February 2022.

Code of Conduct for Political Parties and Candidates

Political parties and candidates have been reminded that they are bound by provisions of the Code of Conduct, which they signed and presented to the Commission along with their nomination papers. Briefly they are reminded to:

- Publicise the code widely in election campaigns;
- Promote a climate of tolerance in which electioneering activity may take place without fear, coercion, intimidation or reprisals;
- Promote and support efforts to disseminate accurate information and materials on the electoral processes
- Respect the role of the news media
- Respect the right of women to communicate and engage freely in any political activities

- Desist from any conduct that is prohibited in the electoral law, including but not limited to, use of violence or threats of violence, use of hateful language, intimidation, bribery and damage to property.

Accreditation of Observers

The Commission has set up an Observers' Accreditation Committee in line with the provisions of the law. Any person wishing to observe any of the electoral processes that ZEC is currently engaged in is encouraged to apply to the Commission directly through the office of the Chief Elections Officer or indirectly through the office of the appropriate provincial elections officer of the province in which the observers propose to discharge their functions.

Accreditation centres have been set up in Harare and Bulawayo for purposes of accrediting observers whose applications have been approved by the Commission. The accreditation centres have been set up in Harare at Belvedere Teacher's College and at St Patricks Hotel in Bulawayo.

Section 40H(2) of the Electoral Act outlines those eligible to observe elections as:

- individuals representing foreign countries or international organisations and foreign eminent persons who have applied to be accepted as observers;
- individuals representing local organisations and eminent persons from within Zimbabwe who have applied to be accepted as observers; and

- individuals representing bodies that exercise functions similar to those of the Commission and that have been invited by the Commission to observe an election; and
- individuals representing foreign countries or international organisations and foreign eminent persons who have been invited by the Minister responsible for foreign affairs to observe an election; and
- Individuals representing local organisations and eminent persons from within Zimbabwe who have been invited by the Minister to observe an election.

To date, a total of 220 local and 2 foreign observers have been accredited to observe the forthcoming electoral activities. The accreditation covers both the voter registration blitz and the by-elections to be held on the 26th of March 2022.

Media Monitoring Committee

A Media Monitoring Committee has been established in terms of Section 160K of the Electoral Act, for purposes of monitoring the media during the election period. This task is executed in collaboration with the Zimbabwe Media Commission (ZMC) (for print media) and the Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe (BAZ) for the electronic media.

The law compels the Commission to attach a report on media monitoring to all election reports submitted to Parliament.

Media Obligations

Sections 160G of the Electoral Act provides for equitable distribution of free airtime by the public broadcaster to contesting political parties and

candidates while Section 160H of the same Act outlines issues to do with political advertising in both broadcasting and the print media.

The Commission appeals to the media and political players to also adhere to the Media regulations outlined in Statutory Instrument 33 of 2008 in the coverage of the by-elections.

Thank you