

OPENING REMARKS BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE ZIMBABWE ELECTORAL COMMISSION TO THE BREAKFAST MEETING HELD WITH THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE, LEGAL AND PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS

The Honourable Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs and Honourable members of the Committee and your Secretariat;

Fellow Commissioners;

ZEC Secretariat led by the CEO Mr Utloile Silaigwana;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

All protocol observed

A good morning to you all. It is a pleasure to meet again to share critical information on issues that relate to the Commission's mandate. I am sure you have heard or read a lot in the media especially the social media on issues concerning the forthcoming by-elections, the voter registration blitz as well as the voters roll. However, the manner in which some of the information is presented is often misleading to our people. The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission is aware that it is accountable to Parliament on matters concerning its mandate and is therefore comfortable to request for such sessions where it can brief the August House through your Committee.

Responding to issues via social media would be disrespecting the very structures such as yours that were established for that cause in the first place. So much has been said in the media and for the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission to remain silent on those issues would send a wrong signal to all and sundry. Further, the Commission is in the midst of preparing for the National Assembly and Local Authority by-elections to be conducted on the 26th of March 2022. The Commission saw it fit that you be briefed on then so that you are informed on the preparations being undertaken.

The Commission is also undertaking a national voter registration blitz and we are sure that your Committee would be glad to hear on how the process is unfolding. The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission has its work cut out and it has annual workplan derived from its 5 year strategic plan which it has to fulfil. The point person in that annual workplan is the Chief Elections Officer who is in charge of operational issues while the Commission is responsible for policy setting.

As you may have read or seen from the media, most of the issues that are being raised by stakeholders are operational issue and therefore Chief Elections Officer, Mr Utloile Silaigwana will brief

the Committee on the issues we need you to know and responses we have to some of the issues that have been raised in the social media circles.

However, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission is concerned over cases of politically motivated violence recently reported in the media and is especially saddened by the resultant loss of life during a rally held in Kwekwe and extends its deepest condolences to the bereaved family.

The Commission condemns and abhors in the strongest terms such acts of violence which have the effect of marring and negatively impacting the electoral environment in the build up to the by-elections set for the 26th of March 2022. It is disheartening to note that such acts of violence are taking place notwithstanding the Commission's plea at a recently held Multi-party Liaison Meeting where political parties were advised to adhere to the Political Parties Code of Conduct set out in the Fourth Schedule of the Electoral Act and to which their candidates made an undertaking to comply with when they submitted their nomination papers.

The Commission would like to reiterate its calls for tolerance by all political parties and election stakeholders and urges all political parties and candidates to adhere to the code of conduct.

It is everybody's responsibility to promote an environment conducive to the holding of free and fair elections and a climate of tolerance in which electioneering activities may take place

without fear or coercion, intimidation or reprisals. Let us all foster and engender a spirit of goodwill where democratic discourse can take place amid a culture of tolerance. We all have an obligation to work towards the consolidation of peace in Zimbabwe.

I now handover the proceedings to Mr Silaigwana our Chief Elections Officer to brief the Honourable members of the Committee on the issues relating to our mandate.

Thank you!