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Implement Comprehensive Electoral Reforms, CSOs Urge Mnangagwa

By Staff Writer

The Civic Society cluster on elections has demanded comprehensive electoral reforms ahead of Zimbabwe's 2018 elections

During a National people's Convention held on November 24, 2017 in Harare, the cluster noted that the country's Electoral Act was not in compliance with the constitution adopted in 2013.

The cluster noted that the Electoral Act was still to be fully aligned with the constitution and that the voter registration regulations still have grey areas.

Organisations under the cluster on elections also noted that in their current state the legislative and regulatory frameworks run counter to the constitution.

The Election Resource Centre (ERC) noted that while there seems to be a new political dispensation in Zimbabwe following the resignation of former President, Robert Mugabe, and Zimbabweans must never lose sight of the need for comprehensive electoral reforms that will result in free, fair and credible elections.

"The Election Resource Centre (ERC) acknowledges the resignation of President of Zimbabwe, Mr Robert Mugabe. While Zimbabweans celebrate this new development they should not lose sight of the inevitability of an election that must ultimately result in a democratic government which remains the only constitutional method that allows citizens to choose their preferred leaders. The ERC insists that a smooth transition must be characterized by a clear road map towards democratic elections in Zimbabwe," noted ERC.

The cluster on elections noted that Zimbabweans ought to call their political leaders to account.

"Zimbabweans must not only register to vote in the ongoing Biometric Voter Registration process but continuously engage and hold those in authority accountable."

The elections cluster further urged authorities to ensure that democratic spaces and processes are created for Zimbabweans to freely express themselves without fear.

Memory Kadau, CiZC Director noted that there is need to strengthen public institutions such as the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC), the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC) and the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) among others.

"The alignment of electoral laws with the Constitution of Zimbabwe as well as the creation of a secure political environment that allows citizens to freely express themselves should be a top priority for the interim government," added Kadau

Not Yet Uhuru: CSOs

By Staff Reporter

Over 4000 civil society leaders met in Harare today for a National People's Convention meant to develop a roadmap for Zimbabwe's return to constitutional order and the realization of a democratic developmental state.

The convention was held at the backdrop of the inauguration of Zimbabwe's President, Emmerson Mnangagwa at the National Sports Stadium in Harare on November 24, 2017.

Mnangagwa's inauguration followed a coup disguised as a military operation to restore order and legitimacy in the country.

The convention took place at a critical juncture when there is widespread euphoria and uncertainty on the future of Zimbabwe with citizens underlying that the interim President must spell out a new beginning in the country's political and governance culture.

Speaking to the Crisis Report, CiZC Chairperson Sally Dura said; **"This convention comes at an opportune time and provides citizens a platform to sober up and reflect on minimum demands for comprehensive reforms in governance and economic spheres."**

"Our thinking and analysis of events going forward should not be clouded by the thinking that Zimbabwe is already in the free zone. We still need to impress upon the interim government provided by Section 101 of the Constitution a reform agenda that has been the bedrock of our democratic struggles," added Dura.

The convention was organized by six Civil Society Coalitions and Networks under the banner of Peoples Will and includes Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition (CiZC), Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe (WCoZ), and National Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (NANGO), Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), Zimbabwe Union of Residents and Ratepayers Associations (ZURRA) and the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC).

In 2006 CSOs developed and adopted the Peoples Charter, a living document that envisions an ideal society aspired by citizens. This convention was therefore premised on the need to give citizens an opportunity to develop a roadmap that allows citizens to drive the transitional process which should ultimately lead to the realization of the envisaged society.

"All Zimbabweans must have a voice in light of this situation. An inclusive process characterized by principles of broad consultation, constitutionalism, safeguarding of fundamental freedoms and respect for human dignity is important as we determine the country's future," read the invitation circulated by the conveners of the Convention.

Presenting at the Convention, Researcher McDonald Lewanika said, **"This is an opportunity for civil society and citizens to mobilize for change and transformation in Zimbabwe. Our reading of the current context should go beyond the euphoria and civil society should begin to drive the transition in Zimbabwe. Civil Society must mobilize begin conversations that will set the tone for citizen's participation in Zimbabwe's future."**

The convention unanimously agreed among other things to engage with the new government led by President Mnangagwa and present a set of demands that range from comprehensive electoral reforms, the return of the rule of law, respect for the constitution, immediate economic resuscitation pinned by a return to macroeconomic fundamentals, religious liberties, inclusion and integration of women and persons living with disabilities into mainstream economic, social and political life and media reforms.



Civil Society Cluster on Women's Rights Calls for Social Protection and Inclusion

The Civil Society Cluster on Women's Rights has called on the interim government to ensure that there is social protection for women and vulnerable groups.



Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe National Coordinator Sally Ncube

Speaking during a Cluster discussion on Women's Rights on the sidelines of the National People's Convention, Female Prisoners Trust (FEMPRIST) Dr Rita Nyamupinga said the economic decline that has characterized the past two decades has hit taken its toll on women with a significant percentage being single parents. "The interim government should institute measures that empower women from living

The Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe demanded

meaningful participation of women in the new political dispensation following the inauguration of President Emerson Mnangagwa.

"We expect the new head of state to address the long history of systematic exclusion of women in the socio-economic and political arena as well as to ensure that women's voices are heard and acted upon by decision makers. Whilst we acknowledge that recent developments provide a watershed moment, and women intend to hold a convention to shape the future they want, we are reminded that this does not take away the fact that the governance crisis in Zimbabwe persists and requires an effective response from all players, including women.

"It manifests through corruption, perennial absence of women in leadership, deliberate systemic exclusion of women except when women have or are perceived to have done wrong, the perver-

sion of state systems, processes, resources leading to an economic fall-out which has resulted in women disproportionately bearing an unfair burden of cleaning up the mess", said the Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe in a statement.

The coalition added that inequality and suppression of women's rights was being perpetuated by the current political developments in the country.

"Irrespective of the different schools of thought on what is unravelling in the current Zimbabwe context, there is a fractured governance architecture which reduces women to pawns in a bigger game which does nothing to advance women's social, economic and political rights. It is our considered view, that if the Constitution of Zimbabwe is to be respected and its freedoms and rights fully enjoyed, there is need for differing and contesting parties to recognize the need to entrench democracy which intrinsically presupposes equality, good transparent and accountable govern-

ance and the rule of law, as per our Constitution. Women seek evident, upholding, defending of fundamental rights and freedoms during this fragile period. The notion of constitutionalism should not be selectively applied, considering that its core has respect for equality in treatment and at law.

"As we work towards new governance architecture it is imperative that women play their role. Further, in this fluid time it is incumbent on all players to desist from using hate speech characterized by blatant sexism. Two wrongs do not make a right! Women invite the various actors to work towards the promotion of good governance and a peaceful environment through ensuring there is no threat to security of persons", added WCoZ.

The Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe (WCoZ), represents non-partisan women's rights organisations and activists in Zimbabwe's 10 provinces.

Media Organisations Call for Robust Media Reforms

By Staff Reporter

The Civil Society cluster on Freedom of Expression has called for radical media reforms following the inauguration of Zimbabwe's new President, Emmerson Mnangagwa.

Speaking at the National People's Convention held at the Harare International Conference Centre (HICC) on November 24, 2017, stakeholders drawn from different civil society organisations and the media called for a robust and genuine transformation of the public media.

Presenting their position during a sideline Cluster meeting at the National People's Convention, stakeholders bemoaned interference of the editorial policy by the government and politicians. They raised concern over the way the government has captured public media and the danger it causes in promoting media

freedom.

Contributing to the discussion, Faith Ndlovu from Voluntary Media Council of Zimbabwe (VMCZ) castigated the government for entrenching unprofessionalism in the public media by imposing news angles and promoting polarization. She appealed to the government to disentangle the public media from state capture.

The Director of the Media Centre, Ernest Mudzengi said that civil society had failed to carry out its mandate in the past due to a number of factors.

"In the past, we have witnessed a non-effective civil society due to interference by politicians and other interest-

ed parties. There is need for a paradigm shift in the way we do things in order to be effective. We need to desist from vacillation and be independent when executing our mandate", said Mudzengi.

The Cluster representatives agreed on three demands that will be presented to the interim government led by Emerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa. They called on non-interference of the editorial policy by politicians, genuine and transparent opening up of the broadcasting media and the transformation of the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) and the Mass Media Trust.

In order to achieve this, the repre-

sentatives agreed to work together through community mobilization.

They also agreed to collaborate and work in a coordinated manner.

The National People's Convention comes at the backdrop of recent uncertainty in Zimbabwe catapulted by succession fights in Zimbabwe which saw the army taking over the running of the state of affairs in the country.

This led to the eventual resignation of President Robert Mugabe and the appointment of former Vice President, Emerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa as the President designate and his subsequent swearing in on November 24, 2017 as Interim President as provided in Section 101 of the Constitution.

Youths Demand Employment Creation and Affordable Education



ZINASU Secretary General Makomborero Haruzivishe

The civil society cluster on youths which met at the National People's Convention held in Harare on November, 24, 2017 has made demands for employment creation as well as affordable education.

The youths cluster was part of the 2 000 delegates that attended the People's Convention.

Zimbabwe National Students Union (ZINASU) Secretary General, Makomborero Haruzivishe said respect for academic freedoms was equally important.

He said that the new government led by President Emmerson Mnangagwa should shun away

from victimizing students as was the norm during the Robert Mugabe era.

"We are demanding education for all and an end to students' victimization. Most students were victimized or suspended for demanding education for all as well as academic freedoms. So we are saying that all suspended and expelled students must be reinstated unconditionally," said Haruzivishe.

He added that the future of Zimbabwe lies with the youths hence the need for youths to rise up and claim their space.

This, Haruzivishe said, would enable youths to play an active role in determining Zimbabwe's future.

Employment creation is also critical as youths have largely been victims of Zimbabwe's economic decline which has seen the unemployment rate going above 90 percent, added Ha-

ruzivishe.

The Unemployed Youths Organisation Director, Onias Kwenda said youths will continue to push the government to revive the economy and create jobs.

"At the moment, the future of youths is doomed because they have no jobs. The government has apparently failed to revive the economy and this continues to affect jobless youths. We shall therefore continue to mobilize youths to pressure the government to revive industry and create jobs. We will work with other progressive forces to ensure that our demands are met

"The government needs to put in place policies that promote Foreign Direct Investments as well as guarding against corruption which has largely led to the fall of our economy," said Kwenda.

The Combined Restitution Association for Zimbabwe Youths (CRAZY) President, Elvis Mugari said,

"As youths, we are demanding our involvement in political and economic decisions. We demand equal and non-partisan distribution of resources to the young people. An economic environment that will attract investors is also critical as this would ensure job creation and ultimately improve the lives of jobless youths in Zimbabwe."

Residents demand devolution

By Staff Reporter

The Civil Society cluster on Local Governance led by the Zimbabwe Union of Residents and Ratepayers Associations (ZURRA) has demanded that Zimbabwe's new government should urgently implement devolution of governmental powers and responsibilities as enshrined under Section 14 of Zimbabwe's Constitution.



Mufundo Mulilo, Local Governance Expert

The cluster on Local Governance noted that devolution of governmental powers was critical to enable metropolitan councils and local authorities to carry out their responsibilities in an efficient and effective manner.

This, the residents' organisations said, would culminate in effective service delivery as well as promote transparency and accountability on the administration of public funds at local authorities.

The Director of Masvingo United Residents and Ratepayers Association (MURRA), Anoziva Muguti expressed concern over the lack of political will to implement devolution of governmental powers.

"As residents association we are very much worried about the blatant disregard of the country's constitution. It's almost five years since the adoption of the new constitution yet there is no progress on the issue of devolution of governmental powers. The interim President

should immediately fulfil Section 264 of the Zimbabwean constitution which clearly outlines the devolution agenda.

"As residents associations, we are going to work collectively to ensure that devolution is implemented," said Muguti.

The residents associations added that devolution would give powers of local governance to the people thereby enhancing their effective participation on issues affecting them.

The associations added it was imperative for government to empower communities so that they are able to manage their own affairs as well as their own development as outlined in **the country's constitution.**

It was noted during the National People's Convention that most local authorities around the country were struggling to offer effective service delivery as a result of financial con-

straints hence the need to transfer resources from the national government.

This, the residents' associations said, would lead to the creation of sound financial bases for provincial and metropolitan councils and local authorities.

The associations however noted that the transfer of resources from the government must be implemented putting into consideration the need to put in place policies that would promote transparency and accountability in the handling of public funds.

National People's convention in pictures



The Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition is a broad based civil society network of over 72 active members comprising churches, women's groups, social movements, residents associations, labour unions, human rights lawyers, and health professionals. It was formed in August of 2001 to focus on democracy, human rights, good governance and sustainable development issues – working locally, regionally and internationally.