

## **AFRICAN UNION**

### **OFFICE OF THE AU OBSERVER MISSION TO THE PRESIDENTIAL RUN-OFF AND HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY BY-ELECTIONS IN ZIMBABWE**

#### **PRELIMINARY STATEMENT OF THE AFRICAN UNION OBSERVER MISSION**

In response to an invitation from the Government of the Republic of Zimbabwe, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, H.E. Jean Ping, appointed and sent an Observer Mission to Zimbabwe to observe the Presidential Run-off and House of Assembly by-elections conducted on 27 June 2008. In accepting the invitation, the African Union was mindful of the fact that the conclusion of the electoral process which started with the March 29th Harmonized elections was of paramount importance for the consolidation of democratic governance and the enhancement of the rule of law in the country.

The Observer Mission is led by H.E. Dr Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, former President of the Republic of Sierra Leone. Other members of the mission include Pan-African Parliamentarians, high officials of election management bodies (EMBs), prominent individuals and members of civil society organizations (CSOs) drawn from various African countries. The Mission also includes a support team of officials and technical personnel from the African Union Commission.

Upon arrival in Harare between 15 and 21 June 2008, the Observer Mission, in accordance with African Union Election Observation Guidelines proceeded to meet and consult with various stakeholders of the electoral process, including officials of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC), officials of the principal competing political parties and members of other election observer groups.

The African Union Mission noted with concern the withdrawal of the MDC-T candidate on the 22nd June 2008. This unexpected development led the African Union Mission to undertake a number of contacts with the judiciary authorities of Zimbabwe to seek clarification of the legal implications of the withdrawal.

Subsequently, the AU Observer Mission deployed its members to the following provinces: Harare, Midlands, Mashonaland East, West and Central, Bulawayo, Matebeleland North and South, Manicaland and Masvingo. As members of a neutral and non-partisan mission, AU observers went out to make an honest, independent, impartial and objective observation and assessment of both the political environment and the actual organization and conduct of the elections.

In the light of these consultations and observations, the African Union Observer Mission to the Zimbabwe Presidential Run-Off and House of Assembly By-Elections notes that:

- The poll was peaceful and held in accordance with the electoral laws of Zimbabwe;
- There was violence in the run down to the elections;
- The fear of violence deterred popular participation in the electoral process;
- There was no equitable access to the Public Media.

Against the backdrop of the foregoing factors, in the context of the AU Declaration on the Principles Governing Democratic Elections in Africa, it is the considered view of the African Union Observer Mission that the Election process fell short of accepted AU standards.

The African Union Observer Mission is however encouraged that both parties have shown willingness to engage in constructive dialogue as a way forward for ensuring peace, stability and development in Zimbabwe.

**ISSUED IN HARARE, ZIMBABWE ON 29th JUNE 2008**

*[Statement released at 11 am on 30th June]*