

**EISA OBSERVER MISSION
TO THE 2008 ZAMBIA PRESIDENTIAL and parliamentary by- elections**

PRESS RELEASE

Lusaka 1st November 2008

In response to an invitation extended by the Government of Zambia, the Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (EISA) deployed a short-term Observer Mission to the Presidential and Mwanabombwe and Ndola Central Parliamentary By-Elections in Zambia of 30th October 2008. Under the leadership of Mr Leshele Thoahlane, Chairperson of the EISA Board of Directors and Former Chairperson of the Independent Electoral Commission of Lesotho, the EISA Election Observer Mission consisted of 20 members from different African countries, namely Algeria, Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Lesotho, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Sudan, and Zimbabwe.

After a pre-deployment orientation and briefing workshop in Lusaka from the 23rd to the 25th October 2008 the Mission deployed nine (09) teams on Sunday, the 26th October 2008 and covered the following areas:

- Lusaka Central
- Lusaka Rural
- Luangwa
- Kabwe
- Livingstone
- Ndola
- Chipata
- Mongu.

EISA observed and assessed the electoral process based on the benchmarks set out in the Principles for Election Management, Monitoring and Observation in the SADC region (PEMMO). The Mission has issued an interim statement and this press release summarises its preliminary observations and findings.

A more comprehensive report on the entire electoral process will follow within ninety (90) days. It will provide detailed observations, in-depth analysis of the Zambian electoral landscape for the 2008 by-elections, and offer recommendations for the improvement of the country's electoral process.

- The 2008 Presidential Election was unprecedented in the history of Zambia as it was the first time a sitting President has died in office. The transition period provided a test

for the country's political stability, particularly its ability to survive potential crisis. The maturity displayed by the Zambian people, as well as the restraint shown by the main political players following the death of President Mwanawasa, contributed to fostering a sense of national unity during these difficult moments notwithstanding that the short timeframe for the Electoral Commission of Zambia (ECZ) to meet the constitutional requirement and prepare for a fresh poll has also put the Commission and other election stakeholders under intense pressure to deliver a successful election;

- The constitutional and legal framework in place for these elections was in line with regional and international standards for the conduct of credible elections and allowed the people of Zambia to freely express their will;
- A few allegations of fraud were made to the Mission. These included the issue of excess ballot papers and subsequent anxiety caused by the impounding of foreign trucks in Livingstone purportedly carrying ballot papers;
- The suspicion that ECZ was subjected to ahead of Election Day could have been avoided through better and prior consultations with stakeholders and more efforts to reach consensus with all competing parties on the various challenges the Commission faced;
- The Mission also noted with satisfaction that the ECZ issued several statements to reassure all stakeholders of its willingness to carry out its responsibilities with independence and this served to improve ECZ interactions with the competing parties;
- However, the Mission found a certain degree of laxity in the handling of the ballot papers and other election materials by the ECZ. Transporting sensitive election materials from one site to another is potentially explosive. It is crucial that they are properly secured;
- Lack of resources, as well as the time constraint, did not allow for a specific voter registration exercise to be conducted in time for the 2008 presidential election. The ECZ should be provided with sufficient resources to maintain continuous registration;
- A systematic voter education and information programme to inform the electorate about the background to the elections or the requirements for voting was not conducted;
- The election campaign has been carried out in a calm and orderly manner with a relative degree of tolerance from presidential candidates despite the tendency of some candidates to focus more on the alleged characters of their opponents rather than on policy issues;
- Most polling stations visited opened and closed on time although a few opened late due to logistical problems such as the late arrival of election materials. Polling materials

were available in adequate numbers and voting proceeded smoothly throughout the process;

- The voter turnout was noticeably lower than in the previous elections. This is a matter of concern as it may point to reduced interest and trust of citizens in the electoral process;
- The electronic transmission of election results was also commendable, and could serve as a good example to other African countries in the use of appropriate technology for elections;
- These elections were unique and provided for unique challenges. Given the circumstances surrounding these elections, the Mission commends the smooth running of the electoral process by the Electoral Commission, the good interaction between ECZ and competing parties, and the responsible way in which the voters cast their votes. Despite the short time frame it was given for preparations, the manner in which the Commission conducted the 2008 Presidential Election has further contributed to improving the democratisation process that Zambia has started with the holding of its first competitive elections in 1991;
- Based on our observations thus far it is the view of the EISA mission that the elections were conducted in a transparent manner and in a way that allowed the people of Zambia to freely express their will. It is the hope of the Mission that the management and announcement of results will be handled in the same manner;
- We commend the people of Zambia for their peaceful conduct during these elections;
- EISA will continue to observe the process until the elections has been finalised and will issue a fuller assessment in its final report.

Abel Leshele Thoahlane

Mission Leader