



ZIMBABWE SOLIDARITY FORUM
STATEMENT TO THE SADC HEAD OF STATES SPECIAL SUMMIT ON ZIMBABWE
MAPUTO, MOZAMBIQUE
14 June 2013

The Global Political Agreement (GPA) contains a declaration of commitment by the parties to work together to create a genuine, viable, permanent, sustainable and nationally accepted solution to Zimbabwe's situation. This commitment has not been fulfilled as the parties have not been able to work together in a way that charts Zimbabwe in a new political direction characterized by good governance, respect for the rule of law, peace and political tolerance. Political interference in GPA processes, politically motivated violence, unlawful arrests, victimization, harassment and the torture and intimidation of activists has come to define the Zimbabwe political system.

The Zimbabwe Solidarity Forum (ZSF) is a network of progressive South African civil society organisations, including youth, women, labour, faith-based, human rights and student formations that are engaged in the promotion of solidarity for sustainable peace, democracy and human rights in Zimbabwe. The ZSF is part of a regional network of solidarity formations working across the SADC region in Botswana, Zambia, Lesotho, Tanzania, Mozambique, Swaziland and Malawi.

The ZSF appreciates the key role SADC has played as one of the guarantors of the Global Political Agreement and through the active engagement of the SADC facilitation team with the ongoing negotiation process between the political principals. At this critical time we call upon SADC not to falter as it seeks to fulfill its mandate to ensure a free and fair electoral process and the democratic election of a legitimate government by the Zimbabwean people.

The last time Zimbabwe had elections in 2008, violence and human right abuses cast the entire region into crisis. Many people were subjected to torture, arrests, victimization, harassment and sadly, the loss of many lives.

We, as the Zimbabwe Solidarity Forum, condemn the ongoing denial of the human and peoples rights that have been taking place and call upon SADC to ensure that elections are carried out in a peaceful and calm environment that brings legitimacy back to the region.

The Constitution

Recent events that culminated in the unilateral declaration of an election date by Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe have violated the spirit of the GPA, undermined the SADC GPA and Roadmap processes, and threaten to plunge the country into a constitutional crisis.

An illegitimate process running into the election cannot be expected to deliver a legitimate election outcome. The Zimbabwe Solidarity Forum remains concerned about the outstanding reforms that will have a negative effect on the elections if not implemented in full.

It is against this background that SADC as one of the guarantors of the GPA, is urged to adopt a firm position at this Special SADC Summit on Zimbabwe and to play a more pro-active role in ensuring the implementation outlined in the GPA and the election Road Map. The role of SADC in monitoring the progress and compliance of the agreement remains essential. It is our belief that it is only through implementation of the framework guaranteed by SADC that Zimbabwe can be able to have free, fair and peaceful elections whose outcome will be respected by all political players.

Therefore supports the call by civil society in Zimbabwe that SADC put pressure on the Zimbabwean government to:

- Comply with the terms of the new Constitution and finalise amendments to the Electoral Law and election-related legislation before the elections.
- Align Sections of the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) and Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) among other obnoxious laws should be with the new Constitution's Bill of Rights (Chapter 4).
- Put in place appropriate systems and mechanisms to eliminate all forms of electoral violence and malpractices in line with Section 156 (c) of the new constitution

The ZSF also supports the following demands by Zimbabwean civil society to the Government of Zimbabwe:

1. To create a conducive environment for the holding of free and fair elections by allowing civil society organizations to carry out their lawful activities without harassment, raids, restrictions and unlawful arrests.
2. Ensure that the public media is accessible to all citizens, political players and allow media practitioners and journalists to operate freely without intimidation, restrictions from repressive legislation and harassment.
3. Reform and professionalize ZEC, realign and harmonize electoral laws with the new constitution, urgently establish the electoral court, carry out an all-inclusive voter education, conduct a transparent and acceptable voter registration exercise.
4. Allow interested foreign observer missions to observe the election and guarantee safety and security to local observers.
5. Professionalize and depoliticize the security sector.

Current events in Zimbabwe constitute a threat to SADC's efforts towards ensuring that Zimbabwe holds a credible, free and fair election, which entrenches peace and stability in the region. We come in a spirit of solidarity with our brothers and sisters as we move towards a watershed election. We urge SADC to implore the government of Zimbabwe to urgently consider the demands made by the people of Zimbabwe, and to refuse to recognise leaders elected through an undemocratic process.

The firm and principled role by SADC in support of efforts to ensure democracy in Madagascar must apply equally to the context of Zimbabwe.

In the spirit of democracy, peace and stability in the region in general and Zimbabwe in particular, we also appeal to the AU in its capacity as one of the Guarantor of the GPA, to urgently deploy its election observer mission to Zimbabwe so as to complement the SADC observer mission and comprehensively observe the whole electoral process. **-END-**