

### **The Petition of the Undersigned:**

**National Association of Youth Organizations (NAYO) of 4 Drummond Chaplin Street, Milton Park, Harare, whose members are the following:**

NAYO, having consulted its member organizations driving the Leave No Youth Behind electoral campaign for 2018 on the petition, these being:

**Youth for Innovation Trust (YIT); Community Youth Development Trust (CYDT); For Youths By Youths; Community Advocacy and Development Association (CADA); Youth For Peace and Development (Y4PD); Africa Foundation for Development and Tolerance (AFDETO); Zimbabwe Reveal for Generation Trust (ZRGT); Mutasa Youth Forum; Real Agenda For Youth Transformation (RAFYT); Hwange Human Rights Youth Forum; Centre for Youth Empowerment and Development Trust (CYEDT); Sheep Gate International; Yield Trust; Great Indaba Zimbabwe; Zimbabwe National Students Union (ZINASU); National Association of Non Governmental Organisations (NANGO) Youth Sector**

**COGNISANT** that the Zimbabwe Election Commission (ZEC) is mandated through section 239 of the new constitution on the conduct of free and fair elections in Zimbabwe;

**CONCERNED** with the processes and pace and substantive content of electoral legal reform being implemented since the promulgation of the new Constitution in May 2013 and the shortcomings in the country's Electoral Law and its misalignment with the Constitution of Zimbabwe;

**ACKNOWLEDGING** the potential of youth to transform their communities if given the opportunity and space by their government

**TAKING** note that the government has committed to ensure that youth, 'have opportunities to associate and to be represented and participate in political, social, economic and other spheres of life' through section 20 of the new constitution; that only 4% of the youth population exercised their right to vote in the last election despite making over 60% of the population

**ALARMED** by the administrative lethargy in Government and the piecemeal approach to the review of the Electoral Law with elections set for next year;

**DESIROUS** of seeing electoral law reform that ensures that Zimbabwean Electoral Law conforms to international and regional standards, norms and principles; a free and fair election in which citizens exercise the right to vote without prejudice

**NOW THEREFORE** petition and beseech the Zimbabwe Election Commission to undertake the following before the conduct of the 2018 general elections:

#### **Legislative reforms**

- The legal framework governing the conduct of elections in Zimbabwe falls short of regional and international standards. Existing laws, particularly the Electoral Act must be aligned to the Constitution.
- Reviewing and amending subsidiary legislation that is contradictory to Constitutional provisions on fundamental freedoms that impact on elections such as the Broadcasting Services Act (BSA), Public Order and Security Act (POSA), Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA).
- In line with the Constitution, there is need for electoral regulations that create an enabling environment for free and fair elections and allow for the participation of citizens including women, youths, people living with disabilities and other disadvantaged groups.
- There is need for legislation that enforces strict adherence to the Political Parties' Code of Conduct to address electoral violence, vote-buying and other malpractices.

- The legislative framework must provide for a voter education framework that is continuous, and provide mechanisms that give life to this principle; and must ensure that the participation of Civic Society Organisations (CSOs) is guaranteed, and not left to the discretion of the ZEC. The legal framework must ensure that such voter education and the materials are accessible to youths, women and people living with disabilities including those visually impaired.
- We call on the Zimbabwe Election Commission (ZEC) to undertake inclusive stakeholder consultations before making key decisions that affect the electorate especially vulnerable and marginalized groups such as youth and women.

#### **Administrative reforms**

- There is need to ensure the full independence of ZEC. Parliamentary oversight of ZEC is necessary to ensure independence and professionalism in the management of elections. The independence of ZEC entails that it is not subject to the direction and control of the Executive or any political party. Members of the Commission must adhere to professionalism by not acting in a partisan manner.
- Election dispute resolution mechanisms such as Multi-party Liaison Committees and Electoral Courts must be strengthened to address electoral disputes timeously.
- There is need for robust voter education on the Biometric Voter Registration (BVR) process to allow stakeholders and voters to understand the process especially youths, young women and persons with disabilities.
- ZEC should make available pertinent information on electoral processes in line with open data principles. The information should be complete, timely, easy to read and analysable. Electoral Management Bodies in SADC are encouraged to share materials and equipment used in the conduct of elections.
- The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) must repeal the decision to re-introduce proof of residence as a requirement for voter registration in the conduct of elections. The electorate must only affirm to a registration officer their physical address without providing proof of residence.

**[It is general knowledge that young people are at the receiving end of the economic challenges; as evidenced by the rising unemployment rate. In that regard, the majority of the youth who constitute over 60 (%) of the total population are not owners of properties, are not employed, do not hold bank accounts and do not have a place where they call their own home (with title deeds). With this background, such a decision will only disenfranchise patriotic and determined youth from participating in such a national process.]**

#### **Political reforms**

- There is need for an enabling political environment conducive for the conduct of free and fair elections to be created before 2018.
- To urgently deal with issues that impact on voter turnout and voting such as vote buying, violence and intimidation, outbreaks of violence, political patronage, information control and weak institutions
- Incorporating an electoral Code of Conduct for members of the security sector, who have been at the centre of political disputes on elections, in terms of their objectivity and neutrality