

**EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

**Account of the mission  
to observe the parliamentary elections in Zimbabwe**

**24-25 June 2000**

06 July 2000

At its meeting on 16 June 2000 the Conference of Presidents of the European Parliament decided to send a mission to observe the parliamentary elections to be held in Zimbabwe on 24/25 June 2000.

It was initially intended that this delegation should consist of 9 members of the European Parliament, to be designated by the political groups in accordance with the d'Hondt system. In fact the delegation consisted of 6 members:

Mr Michael GAHLER

Mrs Karin JUNKER

Mrs Eija-Riitta KORHOLA

Mrs Nelly MAES

Mr Emilio MENÉNDEZ DEL VALLE

Mr Neil PARISH.

The delegation was accompanied by Mr Wood and Mr Rose of the European Parliament secretariat.

It was decided that Mr Gahler would lead the delegation.

Members of the delegation arrived in Zimbabwe on 20 and 21 June 2000, and left Zimbabwe on 25, 26 or 27 June 2000.

### **PROGRAMME OF THE MISSION**

#### **20 June 2000**

13 30 - Meeting with H.E. Mr Flimm, Ambassador of Germany, on the situation in Zimbabwe.

15 00 - Briefing for all EU observers on the background to the elections and the modalities for observing the elections, given by the EU coordinating team.

19.00 - Observation of an MDC election meeting with candidate Michael Auret in Harare Central constituency.

## **21 June 2000**

10.00 - Briefing on the precise arrangements for polling days, and instructions for EU observers

15.00 - Briefing for the European Parliament delegation on the logistics for the observation exercise.

## **22 June 2000**

Accreditation of members of the EP delegation as observers (see below).

Visit by Mr Gahler, Mrs Junker, Mrs Korhola, Mr Menéndez del Valle and Mr Parish, accompanied by Mr Wood, to a tobacco farm owned by Mr Heinrich von Pezold in Mvurwi in Mazowe West constituency, which had previously been occupied.

Visit by Mrs Maes to Marondera, where she observed the situation on occupied and unoccupied farms and attended a ZANU-PF public meeting.

18.30 - Meeting with representatives of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) (the principal opposition party) Mr Learnmore Jongwe, secretary for information and publicity, an MDC candidate, and with Mr Charlton Hwende, of the MDC Youth Council.

(ZANU-PF, the government party, was not able to send representatives because of time constraints).

20.00 - Meeting with Dr Felix Schmidt, resident director in Harare of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.

## **23 June 2000**

The delegation divided into four groups, to observe the elections in the countryside. Two groups, consisting of Mr Gahler and Mr Parish in one car, and Mrs Junker accompanied by Mr Rose in a second car, went to the Gweru area in Midlands Province. The two groups met with Mr Orvar Dalby, EU coordinator for Mashonaland West, in Kadoma, and with Mr Finn Flensted Nielsen, EU coordinator for Midlands Province, in Gweru. They then inspected polling stations being set up in the Gweru area, and met officials responsible for the election.

Two further groups, consisting of Mrs Maes and Mr Menéndez del Valle in one car, and Mrs Kohola and Mr Wood in a second car, went to Mashonaland Central Province to the Mount Darwin and

Bindura area, a part of the country marked by very serious tension. The members of the delegation met with Mr Edward Horgan, EU coordinator for Mashonaland Central province.

## **24 June 2000**

### **First day of polling**

Mr Gahler and Mr Parish visited 11 polling stations in Chirumanzu constituency (Midlands province).

Mrs Junker visited 10 polling stations in Gweru Rural constituency (Midlands province).

Mrs Korhola, Mrs Maes and Mr Menéndez del Valle visited polling stations in the Mount Darwin area.

All members of the delegation returned to Harare for the night.

## **25 June 2000**

### **Second day of polling**

8.30 - Visit to Marondera with Mr Pierre Schori, Head of the EU Election Observation Mission.

9.40 - Meeting in Marondera with Mr Paavo Pitkanen, EU coordinator for Mashonaland East Province.

10.00 - Meeting with Mr Sydney Sekeramayi, ZANU-PF candidate for Marondera and Minister for State Security.

10.40 - Meeting with Mr Israel Karonga, MDC candidate in Mudzi constituency, and Mr Peter Carter, MDC support group coordinator.

11.15 - Visit to polling station, Farmers' Hall, Marondera.

11.35 - Visit to polling station in Marirangwe primary school, on a farm near Marondera.

12.15 - Meeting and luncheon with Mr Pierre Schori in Marondera Hotel.

Afternoon - return to Harare.

19.00 - Meeting with Mr Pierre Schori in the Crowne Plaza Monomotapa Hotel, Harare.

Midnight - Press conference by Mr Pierre Schori, Meikels Hotel, Harare, at which Mr SCHORI presented his interim statement.

## **26 June 2000**

9.30 - Statement issued by Mr Gahler on behalf of the EP Delegation (see annex).

10.00 - Part of the delegation spent the day observing the count for the Harare Central constituency in the Allan Wilson School, Harare.

## **27 June 2000**

Debriefing with Mr Pierre Schori and EU election observation mission.

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## **ACCREDITATION OF OBSERVERS**

On 30 May 2000 the European Commission approved €1.83 million for electoral observation in Zimbabwe. Member States should to contribute an additional €0.6 million, leading to a total EU effort of € 2.4 million. Mr Pierre Schori, MEP, former Swedish Minister for International Development Cooperation, was appointed to lead the EU Election Observation Mission and to speak on its behalf.

The Zimbabwean authorities announced during the week preceding the elections that only 150 observers would be accredited directly from the EU (initially an attempt was made to restrict the number of EU observers to 130, but this was subsequently increased to 150). The members of the EP delegation had consequently to be accredited through their embassies.

As President Mugabe indicated in May that UK citizens would not be accredited as observers, no attempt was made to seek accreditation for Mr Parish, who nevertheless accompanied the accredited observers. With regard to the refusal to accredit British observers, the Conference of Presidents of the European Parliament, at its meeting on 15 June 2000, declared it inadmissible that third persons should attempt to influence the composition of European Parliament delegations, and reaffirmed strongly that only the political groups could determine the composition of EP delegations appointed to observe elections.

In all, some 190 observers were accredited from the EU and its Member States.

It was originally intended that the United Nations Electoral Assistance Unit should coordinate the elections. However following serious difficulties with the Zimbabwean authorities, the UN pulled out of Zimbabwe on 6 June 2000.

The European Union had intended to finance Kenyan and Nigerian observers, who would come under the EU umbrella. Despite the fact that Kenyan observers had already arrived in the country, the Zimbabwean authorities indicated that it would not grant them accreditation.

Similarly, observers from the US International Republican Institute and National Democratic Institute were refused accreditation on the grounds that these were non-governmental organisations. Accreditation was accorded to representatives of the World Council of Churches only on 23 June, the day before polling opened.

Local monitors were seriously handicapped by delays in their accreditation. Most were not accredited until the day preceding polling. They were further handicapped by shortage of transport and by the accreditation of certain local monitors in constituencies far from their places of residence.

### **THE SITUATION LEADING UP TO THE ELECTION**

President Mugabe and his party have ruled Zimbabwe since independence in 1980. In 1989 Mr Mugabe's ZANU party and Mr Joshua Nkomo's ZAPU party combined to form a new party, ZANU-PF. Mr Nkomo became one of the two Vice-Presidents. In the 1995 elections, out of 120 elected seats, 117 were won by ZANU-PF.

In response to growing discontent in the country, exacerbated by a rapidly declining economy, a new party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), was founded in September 1999 under the leadership of the former Head of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions, Mr Morgan Tsvangirai. In addition there are more than a dozen small parties.

The MDC orchestrated the campaign against the Constitutional Amendment Referendum in February 2000, which led to the rejection of President Mugabe's proposed amendments, which included, inter alia, giving the government the right to expropriate land without compensation.

Following this defeat, the political climate in Zimbabwe became much more tense with the occupation of over 1200 white owned farms by so-called "war veterans" from the independence struggle led by Mr Chenjerai Hunzvi, and by landless peasants. It is said that the "war veterans" and others involved in the occupation of farms are paid between 50 and 100 \$Zim. per day. Occupiers move from one farm to another, so at any one time there are usually about 800 farms being occupied. It was reported to the delegation that some 33% of the occupations were accompanied by serious violence, that there was some violence on 22% of the occupied farms, and that 45% of occupations were peaceful. Most of the violence on occupied farms was directed against farm workers, though 5 white farmers had also been killed.

On 2 June 2000 President Mugabe published a proclamation according to which 804 named white owned farms were to be expropriated without compensation. The owners were given one month in which to table objections.

The delegation was told that ZANU-PF finances the land occupations, and it is clear that the President, and possibly the army, support the occupiers. The President openly refused to implement a High Court Ruling declaring occupations illegal, and the police have stood by and, in most cases, refused to intervene, though on one occasion a policeman was killed by squatters. The President publicly contradicted his Vice-President who supported the High Court Ruling.

While land could be a vote-winning issue among the rural poor, the President's credibility is weakened by the fact that the government is currently in possession of some 2.5 million hectares of land which is not being redistributed, and that it granted other land, initially taken over for redistribution, to politicians, officials and businessmen close to ZANU-PF.

It is clear that the land tenure system in Zimbabwe is in need of reform. Some 4,400 white farmers own 10 million hectares of the best agricultural land in Zimbabwe, while over 1 million African peasant farmers farm 16 million hectares of generally inferior land. In 1998 the Commission and

other donors agreed to a strategy to ensure redistribution of land to benefit the poor, with compensation for former owners.

While the need for a land redistribution programme is accepted, and would receive financial assistance from international donors, it is clear that such a policy must be carried out with respect for the rule of law, and with adequate compensation for those dispossessed. Land reform must balance both the economic and the social needs of Zimbabwe.

### **The electoral system**

Zimbabwe has a unicameral legislature consisting of 150 Members of Parliament. Of these 30 are effectively nominated by the President, including 10 representatives of the traditional Chiefs, as well as the 8 Provincial Governors. The remaining 120 MPs are elected from single member constituencies, in a first past the post system with only one round of voting. A voter may vote in any polling station in the constituency in which he or she is registered.

The election was held on Saturday 24 and Sunday 25 June 2000. During the night of 24 to 25 June ballot boxes were sealed and remained in the polling stations, watched over by police, international observers, local monitors and party agents.

Following the close of polling at 19.00 on 25 June, ballot boxes were again sealed and were taken to constituency counting centres where they again spent the night in the presence of police, international observers, local monitors and party agents.

The count took place on Monday 26 June.

According to an addendum to the electoral law, government agents serving out of their places of residence at the time of the election could vote by postal ballot. Most of those concerned were military personnel in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Postal ballots, on a constituency basis, were put into a separate box and were checked separately to ensure that the necessary paperwork was correct.



Before starting the count, once the number of ballot papers had been reconciled with the number of voters in each constituency, all the ballots cast in a constituency were mixed together so that it was not possible to see how any single polling station had voted.

### **Intimidation**

In addition to land occupations, there was a massive campaign of intimidation. Some 10,000 serious incidents of violence have been reported, and 31 people have been killed, mostly MDC supporters. According to the Amani Trust, 85% of the incidents of violence have been perpetrated by ZANU-PF.

Certain parts of the country were particularly affected by intimidation. The MDC reported widespread attacks on their activists, and in certain constituencies candidates were obliged to go into hiding. The MDC candidate in Gweru, not one of the tensest areas in the country, nevertheless built a protective brick wall between the window of his office and the desk at which he worked.

In the rural areas teachers were particularly targeted by ZANU-PF. It is widely believed that teachers, who are strongly unionised and who are often the most educated people in rural communities, back the MDC.

In particularly tense areas hundreds of MDC supporters have been burned out of their houses. On many occupied farms the workers have been forcibly taken to "re-education camps" run by ZANU-PF supporters, where they are subject to mistreatment and intensive pro-government propaganda.

Particularly in the East and North East of the country, ZANU-PF supporters set-up road blocks in order to demonstrate their power.

Throughout the country ZANU-PF activists informed the voters that they would know how every citizen voted, and that those who did not support the government party would be dealt with after the elections.

Many cases were reported of ZANU-PF supporters and "war veterans" taking identity papers from suspected MDC supporters, without which they could not vote.

The incidence of violence in the countryside diminished notably as more international observers were deployed throughout the country.

The atmosphere of violence and fear certainly contributed to reducing the volume of opposition support in the rural areas.

### **Organisation of the election**

According to the constitution, the Electoral Supervisory Commission (ESC) is responsible for supervising the electoral process and the election itself. The ESC was largely sidelined when, 3 weeks before the election, the government extended the powers of the Registrar General, a member of ZANU-PF, giving him control over the electoral process, including the accreditation of observers, local monitors and party polling agents.

The ESC protested, maintaining that it was not consulted. It also protested that it was not allowed to oversee the registration of voters.

### **The electoral rolls**

Before the election the electoral rolls were seriously out of date. European countries, including Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands, provided assistance with the National Registration Exercise. It was clear, however, that even after the initial revision the electoral rolls were still largely incorrect, particularly in the rural areas. Consequently citizens whose names did not appear on the roll were enabled to apply for listing on a supplementary roll. Despite the publication of this supplementary roll many potential voters, estimated at some 10% of the electorate, do not appear on any electoral roll.

The delegation noted that the electoral rolls were published only 24 hours before the deadline for nomination of candidates, thus up to then potential candidates did not know if they were on the roll and consequently entitled to stand for election.

In all the polling stations monitored by the EU delegation, a substantial number of would-be voters' names did not appear on the electoral register.

Rolls should also have existed giving the names of voters who had moved to another constituency. These delocation rolls were missing in several of the polling stations monitored by the EP observers.

### **Media coverage**

The printed press is remarkably free in Zimbabwe. Both the government and the opposition have, effectively, press organs that represent their political viewpoints. The government has publically threatened to curb the opposition press.

Despite the high level of literacy in Zimbabwe, most people, particularly in the rural areas, depend on radio and to a lesser extent television, for news. Both radio and television are totally controlled by the government, and throughout the campaign blatantly supported ZANU-PF. This put the MDC at a disadvantage in propagating its ideas.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Serious intimidation in the weeks leading up to the election prevented the opposition parties, notably the MDC, from campaigning in many parts of the country. The level of intimidation, practised mainly by ZANU-PF, as well as the inability of opposition parties to have access to radio and television, makes it impossible to affirm that these elections were free and fair.

However, on the polling days and during the counting procedure, few irregularities were perceived. There were isolated attempts at intimidation, particularly in the Mashonaland Central, Mashonaland East and Manicaland provinces, but these were kept under control. For example on 25 June 2000 it was reported to the EP delegation that on one farm in Mazowe West constituency a "war veteran" charged with beating up several opposition supporters including a 78 year-old woman, and released on bail, was inside a polling station. The intimidatory effect of his presence in a polling station can be imagined. This matter was reported by the head of the EP delegation, Mr GAHLER, to the EU provincial coordinator, who contacted the appropriate authorities. The delegation was subsequently

informed that the individual in question, Mr Makaya, was asked to leave the polling station by the police and, when he refused to do so, was detained.

The EP delegation, in common with other observers, was of the opinion that the organisation of polling, and of the count, was, as far as could be observed, correct and efficiently carried out. There were errors and irregularities, but these were generally attributable to human error rather than to an attempt to defraud. For example, in one polling station in Gweru Rural constituency, when polling opened on the morning of 24 June, the main electoral register for persons with names from N to Z was missing, not having been delivered. Instead that polling station had been sent the list for another constituency. When the EP team covering that constituency returned to that polling station at 16.00 on the same day, the correct list had arrived, the presiding officer stating that it had been received shortly after 10.00 that morning.

The delegation noted that delocation rolls, giving the names of persons who could no longer vote in the constituency, were missing in several polling stations. This could give rise to irregularities.

The high turnout on polling day was evidence of the courage shown by the Zimbabwean people and their determination to influence their future.

The delegation was impressed by the competence and dedication of most presiding officers and polling officers.

The delegation particularly wishes to commend the work of the EU observer mission led by Mr Schori, which maintained a high level of impartiality and contributed to reducing the level of violence in the days immediately preceding polling. Despite having been set up at very short notice, the EU observation mission was well organised and coordinated, for which the mission's staff deserves praise.

The most serious problems concern the pre-electoral phase. The election campaign was marred by high levels of violence and intimidation, for which ZANU-PF must be held largely responsible. The government and the police did little to curb violence in this period, and President Mugabe's refusal

to implement the High Court's decision against farm occupations seriously weakened the rule of law.

The election was flawed by the inadequacy of the electoral rolls, and the lack of clear instructions to presiding officers in polling stations regarding the treatment of persons with correct identity who did not appear on the electoral rolls. As acknowledgement of registration had not been sent to electors, many turned up with the intention of voting and were unable to do so. Presiding officers were not given instructions that would have allowed such persons to cast their ballot.

The European Parliament delegation believes that the post-electoral phase will be critical. The results from the counts are now available. ZANU-PF has won 62 seats, the MDC 57 seats, and a small party, ZANU-Ndonga, 1 seat. In addition, the President has the power to nominate a further 30 members of Parliament. These results mean that ZANU-PF no longer has the two-thirds majority needed to amend the Constitution.

Mr Tsvangirai, leader of the MDC, who lost in his constituency, has stated that he will challenge the results of certain constituencies in the Courts. It is important to monitor this process and to ensure that justice is done.

President Mugabe has the personal responsibility of ensuring respect for the rule of law, including during the post-electoral period. It is his duty to pursue a policy of national reconciliation, and to use his high authority to this end.

While not being in a position to declare the election free and fair, the delegation nevertheless feels that the electoral exercise has demonstrated that a large sector of the Zimbabwean population wants radical change.

The evolution of the situation in Zimbabwe must be monitored closely both by the Commission and the European Parliament. The release of the second tranche of EU assistance under the 8<sup>th</sup> EDF, amounting to € 30 million, should be dependent on developments over the coming months. The possibility of suspending cooperation under the new Partnership Agreement must not be ruled out.

The European Union, and the European Parliament, have a duty to Zimbabwe, under the ACP Partnership Agreement, to ensure, as far as is possible, that the democratically expressed wishes of its people are respected and the rule of law upheld. The election observation exercise is evidence of how seriously this commitment is taken.