

## The Elders call on all Zimbabweans to put national interest first as poll nears

**HARARE, 21 July 2018**

The Elders today urged Zimbabweans to put the national interest first, reject violence at all stages in the electoral process, and work together to ensure a free, fair and transparent poll on 30 July.

[Kofi Annan](#), [Lakhdar Brahimi](#) and [Mary Robinson](#) met President **Emmerson Mnangagwa**, MDC Alliance leader **Nelson Chamisa** and other presidential candidates on a two-day visit to Harare organised with the support of the Kofi Annan Foundation.

They hailed the improvement in fundamental freedoms that has obtained in Zimbabwe since the end of 2017, and President Mnangagwa's repeated emphasis on free and fair elections.

The Elders also commended the main political parties' commitment to respect the outcome of the election and abjure violence through their signing of the Peace Pledge of 26 June.

The delegation also met the Chair of the Zimbabwe Election Commission, **Justice Priscilla Chigumba**, and other ZEC Commissioners; members of the diplomatic community; and civil society groups, participating in the **Citizens' Manifesto** National Convention.

**Kofi Annan**, Chair of The Elders, the Kofi Annan Foundation and Nobel Peace laureate, said:

*"The upcoming elections are the most significant for Zimbabwe since Independence. The country faces serious challenges which will persist whoever wins; it is critical that everyone acts responsibly before, during and after the elections to ensure a Zimbabwe free from violence, where human rights are respected and prosperity restored."*

The Elders expressed concern about polarisation in society ahead of the elections and the rise of hate speech towards women candidates and officials, especially on social media. They urged presidential candidates to lead by example, refraining from personal insults and promoting civil discourse in political and public life.

They stressed that all stakeholders have a responsibility to ensure the election process is free, fair, transparent and credible, and to respect the integrity of the ZEC.

They were pleased to see signs of progress from the most recent meeting of the Multi-Party Liaison Committee (MPLC) regarding ballot papers, the voters' roll and the organisation of polling

booths, and hope ZEC will be able to confirm these developments at the next MPLC meeting, and take any other measures necessary to build confidence before polling day.

**Mary Robinson**, former President of Ireland and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, said:

*“Zimbabwe is blessed with talented, eloquent and passionate people. We have been deeply impressed by the commitment of civil society groups here to build a better future for their country. The authorities and security services must continue to allow free expression whatever the election outcome, and not revert to past tactics of violence and intimidation.”*

**Lakhdar Brahimi**, former Algerian Foreign Minister and liberation struggle veteran, added:

*“Elections are just one step on the path to national renewal. Candidates must see themselves as rivals, not enemies. The people of Zimbabwe cannot afford more years of infighting, division and corruption; we stand with them in their call for a brighter future.”*

ENDS

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## About The Elders

The Elders are independent leaders using their collective experience and influence for peace, justice and human rights worldwide. The group was founded by Nelson Mandela in 2007.

The Elders are [Martti Ahtisaari](#), [Kofi Annan](#) (Chair), [Ban Ki-moon](#), [Lakhdar Brahimi](#), [Gro Harlem Brundtland](#) (Deputy Chair), [Hina Jilani](#), [Ricardo Lagos](#), [Graça Machel](#), [Mary Robinson](#) and [Ernesto Zedillo](#).

[Ela Bhatt](#), [Fernando Henrique Cardoso](#), [Jimmy Carter](#) and [Desmond Tutu](#) are Elders Emeritus.

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