

## **Zimbabwe: Statement by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union**

The European Union (EU) reiterates its ambition to continue developing a more constructive relationship with Zimbabwe.

The EU welcomes the intention of Zimbabwe's President to extend an invitation to the EU to deploy an Electoral Observation Mission for the 2023 Elections once constitutional processes have been finalised. The EU follows closely the process leading up to the elections, which are of great importance to the trajectory of the country. The EU encourages all electoral stakeholders, state and non-state alike, to play their role in ensuring the organisation of a credible and peaceful electoral process. The EU Election Observation Mission of 2018 provided a set of recommendations and encourages actors to continue improving the electoral framework to allow for credible, inclusive and transparent elections.

The EU welcomes the recent launch of the dialogue platform related to arrears clearance and debt resolution process and looks forward to tangible progress in this process. Furthermore the EU welcomes Zimbabwe's engagement on the Universal Periodic Review process, the alignment of legislation with the 2013 Constitution, the enactment of the Independent Complaints Commission Act, the new Marriages Act and the High-Level Political Compact on gender-based violence. Other developments are of concern from a democratic and civic space perspective. These include the Data Protection Act and, if enacted, bills such as the Private Voluntary Organisations Amendment Bill and the envisaged "patriotic provisions" in the Criminal Law Amendment Bill. The EU also maintains its concerns that the recommendations of the Motlanthe Commission of Inquiry have not been followed substantially and the perpetrators of violations which occurred in August 2018 and January 2019 are to date still enjoying impunity from prosecution. It is important that international human rights obligations are adhered to and the constitutional rights of the people of Zimbabwe respected.

In view of all the above, in its 2023 revision of the restrictive measures, the EU has decided to extend by one year the two measures in place (i.e.: the arms embargo and targeted assets freeze against one company, Zimbabwe Defence Industries). Since February 2022 there are no listed individuals. The EU will continue to closely follow developments, with a particular attention to the human rights situation and recalls its readiness to adapt the whole range of its policies accordingly.

The remaining restrictive measures in place do not affect the people of Zimbabwe, its economy, foreign direct investments, or trade. Zimbabwe continues to benefit from duty free and quota free access of its exports to the EU, while negotiations are ongoing to deepen the Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) Economic Partnership Agreement. There is significant potential in terms of investments and job opportunities, provided that the Government promote political and economic reforms, facilitate a conducive and more predictable business environment, tackle corruption and foster respect for human rights and the rule of law.

Together with EU members states the EU will continue to support Zimbabwe's National Development Strategy 1 in particular on (i) Gender equality and women empowerment and (ii) Greener and climate smart agriculture, with over €400 million until 2025. The EU commits itself to enhancing common efforts on addressing climate change on the basis of the Zimbabwean and EU commitments at COP27. The EU will continue to support the Zimbabwean people with humanitarian assistance, when needed.

The EU looks forward to a more comprehensive and constructive article 8 political dialogue in Harare, including on international issues, and more opportunities for high-level meetings. A positive example was the recent mission to Harare from the EU Special Representative for Human Rights.

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