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Harare – CIVIL Society actors who attended a public meeting organized by the Transparency International Zimbabwe (TIZ) at the Ambassador Hotel in Harare on Thursday, September 12, said the fight against corruption was inseparable from the fight for democracy and better economic management.

Timothy Chiganze, a TIZ board member, said Zimbabwe was currently ranked the 7th most corrupt country in the world. He pointed out that emerging trends showed that it was mostly countries which are known for undemocratic governance and weak institutions that were also known for high levels of corruption.

"The least democratic countries are the most corrupt," Chiganze said. "The most democratic countries are the least corrupt."

The public discussion went under the topic, "No Impunity: Corruption is a crime". Discussants emphasized the need to link the fight against corruption to the struggle for democratisation in the country, saying the struggles were interdependent.

They said because of the impunity, which happens in undemocratic societies like Zimbabwe, it would be impossible to

ensure accountability and reduce corruption without democratic and institutional reforms.

Dr. Ibbo Mandaza, the Director of Southern African Political Economy Series (Sapes) Trust, said corruption thrived in a context of prevalent and abject poverty.

"As long as the economy does not improve there is always going to be corruption," he said.

Mandaza said it was important for those institutions and individuals who are fighting against corruption to research and investigate public reports on corruption in order to "convert rumor into fact" and "put figures to it".

Dr. David Mupamhadze, an economist said the scourge of corruption had taken its toll on the ordinary people who become impoverished when government officials enrich themselves through corrupt activities.

Mupamhadze talked about the issue of the alleged unwillingness by the Ministry of Mines and Mining Development and Zimbabwe Mining Development Corporation (ZMDC) to remit to Treasury revenue from diamonds during the tenure of the Inclusive Government.

"During the last four years of the budgets of the (former) Minister of Finance Tendai Biti, I think it had

become the norm that from diamonds 'I am getting virtually nothing',” Mupamhadze said. “But on the ground we can see that there is activity happening (at the mines).”

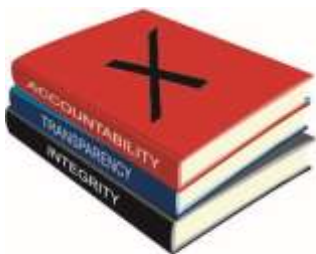
“We are a case study of living in poverty amid abundance because of corruption,” Mupamhadze said. “There is need for accountability at the top level.”

Mapamhadze said it was important for government officials to declare their assets before assuming office and when they leave office to avoid them getting rich over night through unscrupulous ways.

“Let them account how they got their wealth along the way,” he said, adding that there is need for political will to tackle the challenge.

Still no voters' roll to parties in run off elections

Harare – THE Election Resource Centre (ERC), a non-governmental organisation that monitors and advises on elections in Zimbabwe, has released its electoral report noting the unavailability of the voters' roll in the run-off elections conducted in some council wards, following deadlocks in the July 31 elections.



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The ERC report released on September 13 assessed run-off elections in Ward 30 Mutasa Rural District Council (RDC), Ward 5 Kusile RDC and Ward 4 Kadoma Municipality held on September 11 in line with Statutory Instrument 85 of 2013 (SI 85/2013). SI 85/2013 repealed the previous section 129 of the Electoral Act, which required that deadlocks in council elections be decided by the tossing of a coin, and introduced run-off elections.

The ERC said it had assessed the run-off elections, looking at whether the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) implemented recommendations made by both domestic and inter-

national observers to the disputed July 31 harmonized elections.

“The poll further provided an opportunity to assess the capacity of the election management body, Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, to respond to challenges noted by observers, both domestic and international as well as political parties on the July 31st election,” the ERC report read.

The issue of the voters' roll which was contentious in the main election was raised again in the ERC report, with ZEC failing to follow the law and provide the document to contesting parties more than 40 days after the July 31 election.

“It is however disheartening that the Commission failed to provide contesting parties with electronic and analyzable voters' rolls prior to the holding of the run off elections,” the report read. *“This failure compounded the inadequacies of ZEC in meeting the prescribed regulations under the Electoral Act.”*

Since the July 31 election, many stakeholders have requested the release of the electronic voters' roll but the document has been kept a secret by ZEC and the Registrar of Voters' Office amid allegations of electoral fraud.

According to the ERC, which deployed observers to the nine polling stations and also relied on information from civil society partners on such platforms as SMS, Twitter and Facebook, a

repeat of confusion was also witnessed with regards to the large number of voters who used voter registration slips.

“A worrying trend was however observed at Mabanana Creche in Ward 4 in Kadoma where a huge number of people were not found on the voters roll and voted using their registration slips,” the ERC report read. “At least 73 people are reported to have voted using such slips.”



Like the July 31 elections, according to the ERC report, the run off elections were held in a peaceful environment but with incidences of intimidation being recorded.

“The peaceful environment that existed in the pre-election and during polling in the three wards where the run off took place was encouraging,” the report read. “There were no major cases of violence reported although some instances of intimidation were in Mutasa and Lupane districts just before and during the elections.”

However the ERC said it noted positives such as that ZEC held meetings with candidates, there was no shortage of voting materials, and the polling stations closed in time and the peaceful environment although the turn out in the wards was less than 50% of registered voters basing on older copies of the voters’ roll.

Residents outline expectations for Bulawayo local government

Bulawayo – RESIDENTS in Bulawayo on September 12 at a public meeting at the Small City Hall had an opportunity to state what they expect from the new metropolitan government in terms of service delivery.

The public meeting was hosted by Bulawayo Agenda (BA) in collaboration with Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition (CiZC) and the Civil Society Coordinating Mechanism, and was held in line with civil society’s quest to set the agenda for good governance and outline citizens’ expectations in terms of service delivery at local government level.

Among the panelists was Ambrose Sibindi, the Chairperson of the Bulawayo Progressive Residents Association (BPRA), Mandla Sibanda, the Movement for Democratic Change - Tsvangirai (MDC-T) provincial spokesperson for Bulawayo province and Barbara Tapera of Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU). The meeting was attended by 179 participants

of which 86 were female and 93 male.

Speaking at the meeting, Sibindi stated that there was indeed nothing to celebrate as yet but there was a need to set standards of performance for the incoming local government structure while he bemoaned confusion to do with interpretation of intertwined legal regimes of local governance, following the adoption of the new Constitution.

“The new local government structure has at its inception been marred by some confusion on certain constitutional provisions that are presumably in conflict with certain clauses within the Local Government Act,” Sibindi said. “Particularly on selection of candidates for the Mayoral post, this is a sign of an impending false start”.

Section 265(2) and 274(5) of the new Constitution provides for

the filling of mayoral and chairpersonship posts by those persons elected within the local authorities' concerned while Part (V) section (35) of the Urban Councils Act does not specify on the matter, resulting in difficulties on interpreting the law and on finding the correct position.



A resident of Nkulumane 12 high-density suburb who only identified herself as Mlambo, speaking from the floor revealed her wish list of the service delivery areas that the incoming metropolitan government should focus on.

"We expect that the incoming metropolitan government will prioritize water reticulation, health services, waste management and standard sewer reticulation systems and above all their policies and policy making processes should be people driven and centered".

Mlambo was however not optimistic about the new Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (Zanu-PF) national government's ability or willingness to solve some of the challenges, saying it was constituted of people who had mostly failed to deliver on the people's expectations for 33 years, since Zimbabwe's independence in 1980.

"We have had a Zanu- Pf led government for the past 33 years and service delivery deteriorated under their leadership," Mlambo said. "Residents should not expect any improvements under such stewardship.

"Instead, residents should gear themselves for the approaching period of great suffering, a return to the era of shortages and dilapidated infrastructure."

However the ruling ZANU-PF party has pledged to deliver on its election promises after winning a disputed two-thirds majority victory in the July 31 elections.

The ruling party has started implementing populist policies such as the scrapping of the outstanding utility bills for water and electricity, although analysts have warned such moves could backfire by rendering the service providers bankrupt and unable to provide vital services required by residents.