



Defending free expression and your right to know

Following the official announcement of the referendum results by the Zimbabwe Election Commission (ZEC) MMPZ will, with immediate effect, cease publishing its daily updates on media coverage of the process. This report will be the last instalment. However, the organisation will continue assessing the media's coverage of the final stages of the constitution making and other election-related developments in its monthly update: Election Watch. May we take this opportunity to thank you for your valued support. For any views and comments, you can email us at monitors@mmpz.org.zw or sms us on our dedicated hotline cell phone number 0776 739 522.

**The Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe
Daily Media Referendum Watch – No.10-2013
Wednesday, March 20th 2013**

Electronic media report for Tuesday, March 19th, 2013

SUMMARY

THE private electronic media carried 14 reports on the constitutional referendum, held on March 16th.

Of the 14 stories, nine appeared on private radio stations. The remaining five featured on the national broadcaster, ZBC: ZTV (five) and Spot FM (one).

Four of the 14 stories were on the announcement the referendum results by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC).

Five were congratulatory messages from a cross section of Zimbabwean society, election observers and diplomats from the region and the international community, who believed the referendum was a “credible” exercise, despite a number of minor irregularities.

Another five were updates on the court appearance of four MDC-T officials and prominent human rights lawyer Beatrice Mtetwa (which the private radios linked to the referendum), and condemnation of their arrest by domestic civic groups and some sections of the international community.

ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

Zimbabweans praised for endorsing draft

NEWS of the announcement of the results of the draft constitution and the endorsement of the referendum as a 'credible' and 'peaceful' vote by a wide cross-section of Zimbabwean society, the region and the international community, flooded the electronic media – especially the national broadcaster, ZBC.

Although the private electronic media also reported on the extensive approval of the referendum vote in six of their nine reports, they reported Prime Minister Tsvangirai, civic groups, and some sections of the international community expressing concern about what they viewed as a renewed crackdown on perceived ZANU PF opponents. These concerns appeared in three reports.

One of those who were reported condemning the intimidation and arrests of civic and political activists, as well as journalists working for the private and foreign media, was the US-based Human Rights Watch. The global human rights watchdog released a statement yesterday urging the Zimbabwe government to **“stop the abuse of power and hold those responsible to account”**. It complained, **“Police harassment and arrests of civil society activists has worsened as elections get closer”**.

Otherwise, most reports were on the commendation of Zimbabweans for the spirit in which the referendum was conducted.

The praise reportedly came from the US and Namibian Embassies; Zimbabwe's main parties; senior government officials; co-chairpersons of the Constitutional Parliamentary Select Committee (Copac); and some political analysts (ZBC, 19/8, 8pm; Star FM and ZiFM).

In one of these, the U.S. Embassy released a statement **“congratulating”** the people and government of Zimbabwe for holding a peaceful, credible referendum. It viewed the vote as an **“historic step forward”** in the nation's development of democracy and the rule of law (Star FM, 19/3).

While the US Embassy conceded that there was **“no violence or other significant problems”** during the vote, it expressed concern over **“reports that voters in some areas were instructed to vote at specific stations, or instructed to report to political party operatives after voting”** (Star FM).

The embassy also complained that **“accreditation of observers was limited”** but still believed **“that the overall conduct of this referendum has helped to gain the confidence of the Zimbabwean people, neighbouring countries, and the international community”**.

Print media report for Wednesday, March 20th, 2013

SUMMARY

THE print media carried 12 reports on the constitutional referendum that was held at the weekend.

Of these, nine appeared in the private papers, while the remaining three were published in the state-owned daily, *The Herald*.

Three of the 11 reports were on the official announcement of the referendum results by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) yesterday.

Another six were congratulatory messages from regional observers and other sections of the international community who certified the referendum as a “credible” exercise, despite a number of minor irregularities.

The remaining three were editorials. Two praised Zimbabweans for demonstrating a degree of political tolerance during the referendum, while the other condemned the assault of BBC journalists and MDC-T activists by suspected ZANU PF supporters in Harare’s high-density suburb of Mbare on the eve of the vote.

ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

ZEC announces referendum results

THE announcement of the results of last Saturday’s historic constitutional referendum by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) was the highlight of the print media’s coverage of the administration of the referendum.

It also drew Zimbabwe closer to the conclusion of the controversial and long-drawn-out constitutional reform programme, paving the way for the holding of harmonized elections due later this year.

According to figures released by ZEC’s Chief Elections Officer, Lovemore Sekeramayi, 3 079 966 people voted for the adoption of the draft while 179 489 voted ‘No’. A total of 56 627 ballots were rejected, bringing the total number of votes cast in the referendum to 3 316 083 (*The Herald*, *Dailynews* and *NewsDay*, 20/3).

Addressing journalists, ZEC chairperson Justice Rita Makarau commended Zimbabweans for voting peacefully (*The Herald*).

After the release of the results, all the papers reported senior government officials such as President Mugabe and Prime Minister Tsvangirai, the coalition parties, and political analysts congratulating Zimbabweans for voting in favour of the draft constitution (*The Herald*, *Daily News* and *NewsDay*).

In one of the stories, Tsvangirai was reported saying Zimbabwe now faced a ***“litmus test of upholding constitutionalism”*** because of the adoption of a new constitution, which ***“broadens basic human rights”*** (NewsDay). The Prime Minister claimed that the new constitution was ***“a baby of the democratic struggle in Zimbabwe”***, adding: ***“Our conduct in the next elections must show that we truly believe in constitutionalism.”***

Meanwhile, *The Herald* reported Mugabe saying the draft would be handled by Constitutional and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Eric Matinenga. Mugabe explained: ***“Once Parliament has passed it and it’s time to work on the time-frame for elections, Minister Chinamasa will handle it. We will do everything in accordance with the law...we are aware that the term of office of Parliament is coming to an end at the end of March”.***

He added, ***“There is no one really who can extend the term of office of Parliament. We may extend the term of office of the Executive...to work in an acting capacity. We can never, never do anything without someone in Government but we can do without someone in Parliament...”***

Mugabe was reported making these remarks while speaking to journalists at the Vatican in Rome, Italy where he had gone to attend the inauguration of Pope Francis 1.

While all the papers published the results of the referendum, it was only *The Herald* that provided a provincial breakdown of the results and details of the stages left for the draft to become law.

Fig 1: Referendum results table

Province	Yes Vote	No Vote	Rejected
Harare	468 176	41 060	8 222
Manicaland	388 297	22 586	6 802
Midlands	378 445	22 139	6 938
Masvingo	376 713	20 717	7 459
Mashonaland East	374 045	15 405	7 377
Mashonaland West	340 597	17 662	5 365
Mashonaland Central	340 290	9 703	6 980
Matabeleland North	162 236	11 663	3 378
Matabeleland South	129 959	10 040	2 577
Bulawayo	121 108	8 514	1 529
Total	3 079 966	179 489	56 627

Fig 2: Stages left for draft to become law:

- Gazetted for 30 days
- Tabled in Parliament as a Constitutional Bill for debate and cannot be amended
- Goes through three readings in the House of Assembly and voted for by a two-thirds majority
- Taken to the Senate
- Goes through three readings and voted for by two-thirds majority
- If adopted, sent for presidential assent
- Some provisions start working concurrently with the Lancaster House Constitution.

Unfortunately, neither The Herald, nor any of Zimbabwe's other media outlets have clearly explained exactly what provisions in the new Constitution will be enabled before the harmonized elections – and what effect they will have on the election itself.

- The new Constitution replaces the old one after the inception of a new government.

MMPZ regrets to announce that due to a violent storm yesterday, its Internet and email connections have been badly damaged. We are doing all we can to restore our connectivity to the outside world as soon as possible.

Ends/

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