



CCMG Statement on Phase 1 of the 2020 Voter Registration Exercise

Calls on the ECZ to Increase Deployment of Staff and Registration Kits and Ensure Access to Centres and Information for Observers

19 November 2020

As part of its voter registration observation exercise, the Christian Churches Monitoring Group (CCMG) trained, accredited and deployed 330 non-partisan voter registration observers to observe all four phases of the 2020 voter registration exercise. Of these, 298 CCMG observers are deployed to a statistically representative random sample of 1,000 registration centres across the four voter registration phases and the sampled centres located in every province, district and constituency of Zambia. The remainder are deployed to the district boma registration centres. For Phase 1 the sample included 255 registration centres. In addition to their observation at designated registration centres, CCMG's observers also provide weekly reports on the general environment and stakeholder activities, as well as reports of critical incidents and violations of the Electoral Code of Conduct.¹

I. Registration Centre Opening

Based on the reports from its observers, during Phase 1 (9-15 November 2020) of the voter registration exercise, CCMG finds that nearly 100% of registration centres had all the critical materials with the exception of backup registration kits, which were present at 68% of registration centres. However, CCMG notes with concern multiple critical logistical and staffing issues, including the deployment of only one Electoral Commission of Zambia (ECZ) staff (person) at 53% of registration centres. In addition, CCMG observed deviation from the ECZ's published national-level deployment plan, with 6% of CCMG's observers reporting centres not opening, which appeared to be due to district-level deployment plans inconsistencies and last-minute logistical challenges.

II. Registrant Processing Time

CCMG reports that while the time to process registration of a potential voter during Phase 1 is reasonable at an average of 10 minutes, the strong interest by the public in registering, the lack of staff and the lack of additional kits to process registrations has limited the number of potential registrants who can be processed in a day, which has averaged 67 per centre from the data provided to CCMG observers, leading to long lines and congestion, frustrating potential registrants. CCMG notes, however, that these logistical challenges do not appear to have affected significantly one region of the country more than others, based on data from observers on the average number of registrants per centre per day by province or the average minutes it took to register a person per province in Phase 1. ***CCMG calls on the ECZ to immediately deploy additional staff and kits to increase the efficiency of voter registration.***

¹ For findings and recommendations related to the general voter registration environment, please see the full CCMG report available at ccmgzambia.org.



III. *Observer Access to Centres and Key Information*

While CCMG commends the ECZ for processing accreditation for its observers, CCMG notes with grave concern the lack of adequate preparation for and training of ECZ officers the importance of observation by duly accredited non-partisan observers and party representatives. Prior to voter registration, the ECZ did not publicise accreditation procedures thereby creating challenges for organisations seeking to observe the process. Despite being duly accredited and presenting their credentials, 3% of CCMG's observers were not initially allowed to observe.² In addition, 30% of CCMG's observers were not provided with key information on voter registration, including the daily numbers of how many people were successfully registered at the registration centre observed. This information should be public and is required for transparency and confidence building in the process. ***We therefore call on the ECZ to immediately take concrete steps to grant access to registration centres and key registration centre information to all duly accredited observers.***

IV. *Additional ECZ Recommendations:*

Based on its observation of Phase 1 of the voter registration exercise, CCMG also has the following recommendations for ECZ.

- CCMG calls on the ECZ to improve its public communications, given the late and sometimes conflicting communications on voter registration provided to stakeholders and the public.
- CCMG calls on the ECZ to publicly release the targets for voter registration and the number of officers and registration kits deployed for every province, district and constituency, in order to enhance the transparency of the exercise and to allow stakeholders to understand and evaluate the process and rationale.
- Given that the ECZ has announced that it will undertake the voter registration of incarcerated individuals during this voter registration exercise, CCMG calls on the ECZ to enhance the transparency of this exercise by immediately releasing the procedures that will guide this exercise and ensuring accessibility to the correctional facilities where registration will take place by observers and party representatives.
- CCMG requests that ECZ allow an independent audit, sometimes called a voter list verification, of the voters' register to enhance public confidence in the voter registration process and the voters' register by providing an independent assessment of the voters' register.

V. *Political Party and Other Non-Partisan Observers and Civil Society Organisations*

CCMG's observers reported low levels of observation by party representatives and other non-partisan observers, which reduces the ability of parties and other observers to comment on, and provide recommendations for the process from an evidence base. CCMG also urges political parties and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) to

² CCMG notes that extensive contact with the ECZ and with local officials resolved 35% of these issues.



intensify their voter education and mobilisation activities, as our observers report relatively low levels.

CCMG commends the efforts of citizens to register, especially those who had to wait in long lines and particularly the youth and first-time registrants, women and persons with disabilities. We also hereby encourage all eligible citizens to register prior to the end of the exercise on 12 December 2020.

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Overview of CCMG

The Christian Churches Monitoring Group (CCMG) is an alliance of four faith-based organisations formed to help promote credible elections through non-partisan citizen monitoring. The CCMG partner organisations are Council of Churches in Zambia (CCZ); Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia (EFZ); Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflections (JCTR); and Zambia Conference of Catholic Bishops (ZCCB), formerly the Zambia Episcopal Conference (ZEC), through Caritas Zambia. CCMG was founded ahead of the 20th January 2015 presidential by-election. CCMG is a member of the Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors (GNDEM) (<https://gndem.org/>) and conducts all of its observation efforts in conformity with the Declaration of Global Principles for Nonpartisan Election Observation and Monitoring by Citizen Organizations (<https://gndem.org/declaration-of-global-principles/>). CCMG is strictly independent and non-partisan. We support no political party or candidate.