

## Zimbabwe Diaspora Vote Initiative



C/o Padmore Kufa

43 Kalanchoe Approach, Seville Grove WA 6112, Australia

Contact Telephone Number +61 414 477 659

Email: [media@zimdiasporavote.org](mailto:media@zimdiasporavote.org)

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### **Authorities must implement African Development Bank's Advice on free and fair election – Electoral reforms must include Diaspora Vote.**

Zimbabwe Diaspora Vote Initiative applauds the President of the Africa Development Bank, Dr. Akinwumi A. Adesina, for encouraging authorities in Zimbabwe to make tangible progress on, among other things, “human rights protection, and implementation of the laws in line with the constitution”. Dr. Adesina went further to call for “peaceful, free and fair elections”. These measures will clear the path to arrears clearance and debt reduction.

Free and fair elections are those in which every citizen who is eighteen years and above is given the opportunity to vote. The right for Zimbabwean in the diaspora to vote was acknowledged by His Excellence, President Emmerson Mnangagwa who in 2018 announced that efforts would be made to ensure the citizens living abroad should vote by 2023 (Check YouTube link to President Mnangagwa's address to Zimbabweans in New York <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=onN0bCx3TI0>).

The Zimbabwe Electoral Amendment Bill presents an opportunity for Parliamentarians to make the necessary amendments to the Electoral Act to provide for diaspora voting. The Zimbabwe Diaspora Vote Initiative encourages parliamentarians across the political divide to propose inclusion of the diaspora vote. Item 1(2) of the Fourth Schedule of the Constitution of Zimbabwe specifically states that *The Electoral Law may prescribe additional residential requirements to ensure that voters are registered on the most appropriate voters roll, but any such requirements must be consistent with this Constitution, in particular with section 67.* Government employees working at embassies already vote, and this should be extended to other citizens.

Zimbabweans living in the Diaspora have contributed immensely to the economy as acknowledged by various senior Government officials who include the President. Enabling them to vote fulfils President Mnangagwa's wish for citizens based outside Zimbabwe to enjoy the same rights as enjoyed by their counterparts in Zimbabwe.

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