PRESS BRIEF

BY

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This briefing is part of the SADC Mission's interaction with the public and the members of the media. It is intended to air SADC Mission's appreciation of the electoral process, particularly on what obtains on the ground as the polling day draws closer.

The presence of SADC Electoral Observer Mission in Zimbabwe follows the invitation extended by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission to come and witness the Presidential run-off and House of Assembly by-elections. This is in line with the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections.

As of today, 24 June 2008, the Mission has more than 400 observers on the ground and deployed to all ten (10) provinces of Zimbabwe since 9 June 2008. The SADC Mission has been interacting with other observer missions, members of the civil society and electoral management authorities and other relevant stakeholders in order to build a common view on the process. It is important to remind that SADC's mandate and terms of reference emanates from the SADC
Principles and Guidelines and conducts its activities within the provided limits and the laws of Zimbabwe.

Since its deployment, SADC Mission has witnesses with deep concern a widespread politically motivated violence which is hindering free political activities, threatening and/or endangering lives and properties of the very citizens political parties seek their votes. In some instances, some SADC observers have been also harassed and threatened while in performance of their duty and dully accredited.

The SADC Election Observer Mission (SEOM) is deeply concerned by the level of violence and strongly condemns all forms of violence and further urges the perpetrators to desist from these actions with immediate effect. The Mission further wishes to appeal to the relevant authorities particularly supporters of political parties and candidates to restrain from all forms of violence. SADC also urges the law enforcement agencies to ensure that there is law and order in the country.

It is the Mission's view that as the polling day draws closer, mutual tolerance is critical for this electoral process to be credible in the eyes of the people of Zimbabwe, of SADC and of the international community at large. SADC Electoral Mission therefore, strongly urges the contestants to these elections to appeal to their supporters to restrain from violence and conduct a peaceful and tolerant political campaign.

The SADC Electoral Mission noted the announcement of the withdrawal by one of the contestants in the Presidential run-off from the electoral
process. It is SADC Observer Mission's hope that the political leadership of Zimbabwe and its people will find the best platform that will take them to a satisfactory conclusion of this process.

SADC reiterates its continued commitment to help the people and the political leadership of Zimbabwe to go through this process and refocus their efforts into the development of the country.

Once again, the SADC Mission appeals for calm, tolerance, serenity and urges all the stakeholders to work together for a positive closure of this chapter.

THANK YOU ALL