HEAD OF THE AFRICAN UNION ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION TO ZIMBABWE’S ELECTION SAYS AU WILL BE OBJECTIVE, NEUTRAL AND IMPARTIAL AS HE LAUNCHES MISSION IN HARARE

Harare, Zimbabwe 25 July 2018- With five days to go before the Zimbabwean harmonized presidential, legislative and local council elections are held on 30th July, the African Union Election Observation Mission (AUEOM) has been officially launched by its head, former Ethiopian Prime Minister Mr. Haile Mariam Desalegn. The AUEOM comprises a long term observation mission (LTO) and a short term observation mission (STO).

At a function attended by the STOs and representatives of the LTOs, as well as by members of the media, Mr Desalegn told the observers: “The work of the AUEOM is critical to ensuring peaceful, credible and transparent elections. We must follow African Union election observation principles and criteria for assessing democratic elections, such as objectivity, neutrality, impartiality and constructiveness”.

The 50 short term observers who arrived in the country over the past two days, will undergo training for the next three days to provide them with background information on the current political context in Zimbabwe, the state of electoral preparedness, the legal frameworks governing the elections and the AU election observation methodology. This will enable them to objectively assess the elections. They will be deployed to different parts of the country on Saturday 28th July, where they will join their long term colleagues who have been in the country since July 1.

Since their deployment, the long term observers (LTOs) have been meeting with government officials, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC), political parties, civil society organisations, domestic and international observers and the diplomatic community. They have also been documenting their findings.
Mr. Desalegn arrived in Zimbabwe on the 24th of July, and was met at the Robert Gabriel Mugabe International Airport by Zimbabwe’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr Sibusiso B Moyo. Since his arrival, he has held meetings with his team and with different stakeholders.

On 25th July, he paid an official courtesy call to the Foreign Affairs Minister, before meeting with the Commissioner General of the Zimbabwe Republic Police Mr. Tandabantu Godwin Matanga to discuss their state of preparedness, their level of involvement in assisting and facilitating the electoral process, and any issues of concern and challenges that the AUEOM should be aware of.

In all his engagements to date, the message of the head of mission has consistently been about the need for peaceful, credible and transparent elections. He recalled that the AU’s presence in the country follows an invitation to observe the elections by the government of Zimbabwe, and by the ZEC. He also reiterated that the AU conducts its election observation work in accordance with the 2007 African Union Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance; the 2002 OAU/AU Declaration on Principles Governing Democratic Elections in Africa; the 2002 African Union Guidelines for Election Observation and Monitoring Missions; the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights; and the 2005 Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation, which provides guidelines for professional and impartial methods of international election observation. The mission will also be guided by Zimbabwe’s constitution and legal framework governing the conduct of elections.

Between now and election day on 30 July, Mr. Desalegne is expected to continue meetings and discussions with stakeholders who include, the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe Mr. Emmerson Mnangagwa, leaders of opposition parties, officials of the country’s ruling party, government officials, the Africa Group of Ambassadors and other observation missions present in the country.

On election day, he will visit various stations to observe the voting process. The AUEOM will also be doing the same countrywide.

On Wednesday 1 August, he is expected to deliver the preliminary statement of the AUEOM at a press conference in Harare. It will summarize the key findings of the AUEOM. His last engagement will be on 2 August when he will have final meetings with stakeholders.

The LTOs meanwhile, will stay on in the country until 14 August to follow up on the post-election developments, including results tabulation and announcement, and election disputes resolution, if necessary.

The overall objective of AUEOMs is to promote democratic governance by building public confidence in electoral processes in member states of the AU. This objective is in line with aspirations outlined in the AU’s Agenda 2063, particularly Aspiration III, which aims to ensure good governance, democracy, and respect for human rights, justice and
the rule of law on the continent. The conduct of peaceful, democratic and credible elections is deemed critical to the realization of Agenda 2063 and the attainment of the AU’s vision of an integrated, peaceful and prosperous Africa.

*The preliminary statement of the AUEOM will be posted on www.au.int soon after delivery.*

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