

The LEGAL MONITOR

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COST-FREE

Voters' roll a graveyard

HARARE-MPs have demanded an urgent comprehensive audit of the national voters' roll after unearthing "multiple entries and general inaccuracies" that include a one-year old child being recorded as an eligible voter.

In a Parliamentary debate last week, legislators argued that the "chaotic" voters' roll must be overhauled before any election is held.

Masvingo Urban MP, Tongai Matutu said the entire voters' roll should be discarded, while government should facilitate the compilation of a fresh voters' roll. He said this process, which would cost US\$15 million, was essential to the creation of an environment for credible elections.

Introducing the motion in Parliament last week, Matutu said: "Convinced that an audit of the voters' roll is urgent and necessary to ensure that future elections are credible, this House calls upon the inclusive government to immediately carry out a comprehensive audit of the voters' roll to get rid of all inaccuracies and irregularities."

Matutu claimed the voters' roll was in a "chaotic state" given that deceased people, some over 100 years old still appeared on the document. Hundreds of other names have been entered more than once.

The chaotic state of the voters' roll was most apparent in electoral petitions challenging the results in 105 constituencies following the March 2008 elections.

"Regular and fair elections are core of any democracy. The holding of such elections should be on an accurate and up-to-date voters' roll," said Matutu, adding that in his constituency, there were 33 871 registered voters as of last year's elections, including someone recorded as being 122 years old.

"Of these 503 are over 90 years and the surprising thing is their date of birth, which is, 1 January 1901. Five hundred and three people are dead and it goes on to show the extent to which the voters' roll should represent the graveyard. I have the list of those people who are 107 years old still appearing on the voters roll," Matutu said, adding that given that the life expectancy in Zimbabwe was around 44 years.

Matutu claimed some names appeared in multiple constituencies. He gave the example of one Hezekia Rumbabvu who appeared on both Masvingo Urban and Gutu North constituency voters' rolls.

"What we are saying is if a voters' roll has someone who is one year old, then we have a problem. There could be a typing error, but that reflects on the state of the voters' roll. This is a serious indictment on those that administer the voters' roll, it is because they do not check on these figures," said the vocal legislator. "I stand here to challenge the Registrar-General and all those that administer the voters' roll to come and dispute this information."

Pishai Muchauraya, the MP for Makoni South said multiple entries meant some people could vote twice. He said the 5.9 million names on the voters roll could not be justified basing on the country's population.

"This is a personal experience. My name appears both in Makoni Central and Makoni South. It seems deceased people are not being removed from the voters' roll. Since the Registrar General of voters is the Registrar General of deaths and births, it is difficult to see how this can happen," he said.

David Coltart, Senator for Khumalo constituency noted: "The principal function of this transitional government is to prepare a new Constitution of Zimbabwe. The second function is to prepare for elections. There are 14 by-elections coming up and we have another 14 by-elections threatened because we have MPs who are facing charges, which could result in the suspension

from this House. That means we have 28 by-elections and we do not have a voters' roll on which you can hold a credible by-election." ZANU PF legislator for Zvishavane, Obert Matshalaga defended the multiple entries of voters as "genuine errors in the computerised world". He said it would be wasteful to allocate US\$15 million to the voters' roll exercise.

"When you put priorities, yes we need a new voters' roll. But the timing is not conducive. We can't be looking for donor funding (for the voters' roll) when actually we should be looking for funding for agricultural inputs. It is an anomaly. We know that our people are struggling. Here we are, seated looking for money to change names here and there."

Jeffryson Chitando, the Masvingo Central MP said his grandfather, Joram Chitando, and his sister, Martha Chitando, who passed away five years ago were still listed as voters.

Matutu said countries such as Zambia had a computerised system with details such as photographs on voters' profiles included.

Muchauraya said compared to countries like Rwanda, Zambia, Malawi, Zanzibar, Swaziland and Nigeria, Zimbabwe's voters' roll was "outdated, out-modelled, old fashioned and inefficient."

In an interview over the weekend, Matutu said he was now awaiting Patrick Chinamasa, the Justice and Legal Minister – who oversees the Electoral Act – to respond to the motion.

Contemptuous prosecutor rewarded

HARARE-The Attorney General (AG)'s Office has promoted Andrew Kumire, whose questionable evasion of jail last month led to the resignation of a Magistrate, in a development that observers describe as yet another mockery to the justice system.

Kumire, who was the area prosecutor for Chitungwiza, has now been elevated to area public prosecutor for Harare Province. All prosecutors at Rotten Row, Mbare and Chitungwiza Magistrates Court will now report to him with effect from next month, according to information at hand.

Kumire is taking over from Jonathan Murombedzi who has been transferred to Marondera.



New Harare Area Public Prosecutor Andrew Kumire

The controversial stunned the Rotten Row court last month when he evaded a five-day jail sentence for contempt of court by seeking refuge at his boss, AG Johannes Tomana's office.

Harare Magistrate Chiwoniso Mutongi had convicted Kumire after the State lawyer banged his hand on a desk and clicked his tongue in disapproval of a ruling by Mutongi while prosecuting in rights lawyer, Alec Muchadehama's contempt of court trial.

Kumire never tested jail, and was later granted bail by Provincial Magistrate, Mishrod Guvamombe, leading Mutongi to quit in protest against the preferential treatment given to the law officer.

In her resignation letter to Chief Magistrate Hlekani Mwayera, Mutongi said despite the abuse and harassment she experienced at the hands of Kumire, the Chief Magistrate had failed to protect her.



Zimbabwean on Friday joined the world to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. UNICEF country representative Dr Peter Salama spoke strongly against the militarisation of children. But, as children clad in army uniform at the event show, Zimbabwe has to do more to ensure children are protected from institutions associated with violence and rights abuses.

Cautious optimism over airwaves freedom - MISA

HARARE-The Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) has said optimism that airwaves will be freed soon is still high, but expressed concern that the Inter-Party Agreement still recognises laws used to close down media space in the past.

Njabulo Ncube, MISA-Zimbabwe chapter Vice Chairperson told delegates attending the official launch of a public broadcasting survey that the transitional government remained the best chance to liberalise the media.

“We must, however, qualify our optimism with caution. This is because we are worried that Article 19 of the Inter-Party Agreement recognises laws that have been used to repress the media in Zimbabwe, namely, the Broadcasting Services Act (BSA) and the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA),” said Ncube, a senior journalist who has covered

Zimbabwe’s unfolding political story for over a decade.

Over 100 local and foreign journalists have been arrested, jailed, and deported by State authorities under the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA). The draconian law crafted in 2002 has also led to the shutdown of at least five privately owned newspapers.

The State has maintained its monopoly over the airwaves using the Public Broadcasting Act. The information ministry recently showed desire to keep the status quo by appointing people involved in the closure of newspapers such as Media and Information Commission chairman Tafataona Mahoso to the controversial new Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe (BAZ) board. Prime Minister Tsvangirai has said the BAZ board,

which included top military personnel would be reconstituted in line with Inter-Party Agreement requirements to democratise the country. The BAZ board is responsible for licensing and regulating the broadcast media.

Ncube said current negotiations to end a political impasse in government should result in the opening up of space to new independent newspapers, radio and television stations.

“In the last ten years, there has been little to no change in the regulation of the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Holdings, which has functioned more as a state broadcaster than a public one. Neither has there been any granting of television or radio broadcasting licenses to interested media players. Instead, the general tendency has been that previous governments have promised to free the airwaves only in word, but not in deed.”

Parly tames RBZ

HARARE-The Parliament has unanimously passed the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) Amendment Bill aimed at reforming the central bank, including reducing the powers of the bank governor accused by critics of policies that ruined the economy.

The bill passed last Wednesday was the first major law to be passed by the House of Assembly since the formation of a power-sharing government between Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai and his rival President Robert Mugabe in February.

The Bill, driven by Finance Minister Tendai Biti, seeks to reduce the powers of the governor by appointing an independent chairperson and board, while restricting the bank to issues relating to interest rates, currency management and bank regulation. Economists, politicians and international financiers such as the IMF have fingered RBZ quasi-fiscal activities as being a major factor for Zimbabwe’s economic collapse.

Critics blame Gono for policies that helped cripple the economy - fuelling inflation by printing money and taking over functions of the Treasury, including buying farming inputs and extending financial support to government departments.

With the new law, the governor’s core function would be to chair a planned monetary policy committee.

ZANU PF legislators had threatened to block the Bill, arguing that the proposed law personally targeted Gono, a close ally of President Mugabe with whom Biti has had an uncomfortable relationship. At one time, Biti called Gono the “number one enemy” of the country.

Biti and ZANU PF lawmakers, led by Paul Mangwana struck a deal to make changes to the Bill, including a clause giving immunity to Gono and employees “for anything done in good faith and without negligence”.

Biti recently said the government was failing to attract funding from foreign donors for next year’s national budget because they feared the money could be misused by the RBZ, hence the need to curtail the central bank’s powers.

The Bill will now be debated in the Senate, which is largely ceremonial, and will become law once assented to by President Mugabe.



MISA-Zimbabwe Vice Chairman Njabulo Ncube (right), Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai and media lawyer Chris Mhike share a lighter moment at the launch of the Report on the Public Broadcast Media

Court frees destitute farm workers

ODZI-Mutare Magistrate Fibion Feshete recently freed 25 former farm workers who were arrested for allegedly occupying a gazetted land belonging to Mike Madiro, a former ZANU PF chairman for Manicaland Province.

Feshete removed the 25 farm workers who had occupied a small portion of land close to Wilton Farm in Odzi, about 40 kilometres outside Mutare, from remand after State prosecutors consented to an application for refusal of further remand.

Blessing Nyamaropa of ZLHR represented the former farm workers, most who have become destitute after being driven off the farm they worked for most of their life before Madiro’s takeover.

Nyamaropa had applied for refusal of remand on the basis that there were no documents supporting or suggesting that the portion of the land occupied by the former farm workers was gazetted by the government and belonged to Madiro.

The workers, a fusion of immigrants from Malawi and those born and bred on the farm, occupied the small portion of land in Odzi after being forced off the farm by Madiro.

Madiro, assisted by the police, chased the former workers away because, unlike the commercial farmer he grabbed the farm from, could not employ all the workers.

The General Agricultural and Plantation Workers Union (GAPWUZ) last week revealed that farm

workers have been the silent, yet worst victims of the chaotic land reform programme that started in 2000. In a report, the union said studies showed that farm workers suffered a hundred times more for every abuse meted to a single farmer during the country’s often violent and ill planned land reform programme.

The agricultural workers union stressed that the ongoing displacement of farm workers was leaving children and pregnant women destitute and vulnerable to disease and death.

Zim judges least paid

HARARE-The Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs, Patrick Chinamasa, last week said Zimbabwean judges are the least paid in the region with an average salary of US\$300 a month.

“We had a meeting to discuss judges’ conditions of service, we wanted to listen to their concerns and see what can be done to improve them. The conditions of service of our judges are very bad,” said Chinamasa after coming out of the meeting which lasted about two hours last Wednesday.

The meeting was attended by all the country’s High Court judgesandtheMinisterofFinance,TendaiBiti.

It could not be established whether Chinamasa wanted Biti to consider a review of judges’ perks ahead of the 2010 National Budget expected to be presented to Parliament next month.



Members of the judiciary

The bank bought brand new 32-inch plasma TV sets while the Chief Justice Godfrey Chidyausiku and Judge President Rita Makarau got 42-inch screen sets. These came with paid up digital television subscriptions.

But analysts argued at the time that the move by the RBZ was designed to buy the allegiance of the country’s judges.

Police bar civic education

MVURWI-Politicians in Mashonaland Central Province have barred two civic society groups from carrying out civic education on the constitution making process.

The Zimbabwe Human Rights Association (ZimRights) and Artists for Democracy in Zimbabwe Trust (ADZT) intended to host a musical concert - “Jive It the People’s Constitution” at Mvurwi Stadium last Saturday but were forced to cancel the event after authorities at Mvurwi Town Council refused to allocate a venue for the event.

Officials from the two organisations were tossed from one office to the other last Friday from 9 am until 5 pm when the matter was referred to Mashonaland Central Governor Martin Dinha who conveniently made himself unavailable.

This was despite the fact that the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) had cleared the event.

Officials at Mvurwi Town Council told officials of the two organisations that they needed “political clearance” before carrying out their lawful work.

The “Jive It the People’s Constitution” concerts are designed to raise awareness among citizens on the importance of the ongoing constitution making process as well as encourage them to participating in the process.

Bennett trial continues

HARARE-The high profile trial of MDC senior official Roy Bennett resumes today as defence lawyers seek to force the prosecution to release a police investigations logbook that could expose the face behind the case.

Bennett, treasurer-general of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), is on trial and faces the death sentence for allegedly being in possession of weapons for purposes of insurgency and banditry.

Attorney General Johannes Tomana, leading the prosecution, is refusing a request by defence lawyer Beatrice Mtetwa to provide the court with the police investigations logbook that links Bennett to the crime.

The defence team accuses the police of parading in court weapons unrelated to the charges and say details that the prosecution is relying on to incriminate the Deputy Agriculture Minister-designate are fabricated.

Police Chief Superintendent James Makone, the first State witness to testify was last week at pains to pin the weapons produced as evidence in court

to Bennett. Makone, who is the investigating officer, admitted that he was unsure whether the weapons he brought to court were found on key State witness, Peter Michael Hitschmann. The prosecution is arguing that Bennett paid for the weapons found in Hitchmann’s possession and that the two were accomplices in trying to topple the previous government.

Mtetwa said the police had brought to court licenced weapons belonging to Hitschmann, who prosecutors claim implicated Bennett when he was arrested for possessing dangerous weapons in 2006.

Hitschmann was jailed for illegally possessing six sub-machine guns, a pistol and two machine guns, but the court threw out the more serious terrorism charges against him after finding that he had licences for most of the firearms.

Mtetwa said the police in Bennett’s case had added several other guns, anti-riot grenades, stun grenades and thousands of rounds of ammunition, whose origins could not be established and were never produced in the trial of Hitschmann. “This is part of a police publicity stunt to whip up

public sentiment and misrepresent facts before this court,” said Mtetwa. Makone admitted that some of the weapons now part of the exhibits were from another case, which is not related to Bennett and Hitchmann.

When the trial adjourned last week, the State had refused to furnish the defence with a police logbook, which relates to a laptop taken from Hitschmann, and allegedly used to communicate about masterminding the banditry plot. But the defence claims that the e-mails were generated when the laptop was in custody of Central Intelligence Organisation’s operatives.

Justice Chinembiri Bhunu is expected to rule this week on whether the State must be forced to surrender the logbook. Tomana argued the logbook was “confidential” and would compromise “State security” if its contents were made public.

Hitschmann, who is cited by the State as a witness who “voluntarily” implicated Bennett, has since indicated that he does not want to testify because he has no evidence that incriminates Bennett.

Masvingo Urban - Under age voters registered

Last Name	Fist Name	Sex	DOB	Age	National ID	Block	Address
GWARAVANDA	STANLEY	M	03/01/1990	17	04-145651-R-04	022322	4921 SHUKUKUVIRI ST RUJEKO B MASVINGO
MUTSEYI	PORTIA	F	05/01/1990	17	22-254161-E-04	011322	17108 RUNYARADZO SOUTH WEST MASVINGO
KASENYA	TAKUDZWA ARNOLD	M	06/01/1990	17	22-2024173-X-27	011922	VICTORIA HIGH SCHOOL COTTAGE
MUZUWA	PATRICK	M	06/08/1990	17	08-257096-D-27	030922	2011/14 VAKAI CRESENT MUCHETE C MASVINGO
CHIBAYA	RACHEL	F	07/01/1990	17	22-264361-R-54	900822	1530 NDIRIPO ST WEST MASVINGO
MACHAKATA	EVANS	M	08/02/1990	17	22-253932-F-83	032322	19893 CHIDEMBO ST RUJEKO MASVINGO
MADZVOWA	ESTHER CHARITY	F	08/02/1990	17	22-256268-V-83	060822	2592 6TH ST CHESVINHO MASVINGO
PANGANAI	SINDY	F	09/01/1990	17	83-168482-Y-83	020322	1014 KYLE CRESENT EAST VALE MASVINGO
MUSHENJERE	LILIAN	F	10/01/1990	17	22-262847-W-83	012322	3763 MUPFURA CL RUJEKO ST MASVINGO
MAZHINDU	LEWIS TATENDA	F	11/02/1990	17	22-263225-G-22	011222	STD 8944 CHITIVA ST CHESVINGO MASVINGO
PINDUKA	THOMAS	M	11/02/1990	17	22-254075-L-54	010822	304 MAKUVA ST MUCHEKE MASVINGO
MUKUZE	MUNYARADZI	M	12/01/1990	17	22-255704-G-04	032322	19709 CHIPEMBWE STREET RUJEKO C MASVIGO
MUGABE	BRIAN	M	14/01/1990	17	22-262878-E-22	090822	1576 T MAFUDZE ST R WEST MASVINGO
MARASHA	TINASH PRINCE	M	15/01/1990	17	63-2194924-V-04	022322	HOUSE NO 733 RUJECK 1 B MASVINGO
GUMEDE	SIBONGILE	F	16/01/1990	17	22-254942-D-27	040922	STAND 2953/22 PRODUCTION BRIGADE RUNYARA
ZIMUTSA	WINFINDER SHAILLEN	F	18/01/1990	17	22-263938-G-22	020922	2476/28 NYARADZO ST RUNYARARO MASVINGO
NGORIMA	CLEVER	M	19/02/1990	17	22-263119-R-75	010822	110 ZIMUTO ST MUCHEKE MASVINGO
MUVUNGANI	TANAKA JOY	M	20/02/1990	17	29-263650-P-27	030922	2370/50 NYARADZO ST MUCHEKE MASVINGO
KASHUWARE	BRILLIANT	M	21/02/1990	17	22-263396-S-22	090822	RUNYARARO WEST B/CENTRE MASVINGO
DHOROBE	PREDANCE	F	23/01/1990	17	22-253977-E-14	011322	STD 10581 NDIMA CLOSE RUNYARARO MASVINGO
MUBVONGODZI	GRACIOUS	F	24/01/1990	17	22-263088-H-22	020122	41 INFANTRY BATTILION MASVINGO
CHIMENYA	ROBIN TAWANDA	M	25/01/1990	17	63-2048058-H-18	020922	2377/18 NYARAZO ST CHESVINGO MASVINGO
MKWANANZI	GIFT	M	26/01/1990	17	08-874352-J-39	010322	PLOT 16 GLYNTOR MASVINGO
TAPERA	PATIENCE TAKUNDA	F	30/01/1990	17	22-255339-K-77	030922	2000 MUZENDA STREET PANGOLINE MASVINGO

Excerpts of sample showing voters’ roll irregularities as of March 2008. Above is a list of some people included on the voters’ roll prior to last year’s elections despite being under the official voting age of 18.

Source: Hansard

100 Zim children dying daily

HARARE-One hundred children die a day in Zimbabwe, according to shocking United Nations figures that show how a prolonged humanitarian crisis has robbed millions of their right to life, survival and development.

Presenting these grave figures, UNICEF representative, Dr Peter Salama said Zimbabwe's case presented a "tragic" contrast to global trends. "While the rate of under five mortality has dropped all over the world, it has gone up in Zimbabwe by more than 20 percent," Dr Salama said.

"Around one in ten children today die before the age of five. This represents around 100 child deaths a day - most are entirely preventable," he told stunned guests to the 20th Anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child on Friday.

Children have been some of the worst victims of Zimbabwe's decade-long political and economic strife. Mothers in labour and children have died in larger numbers as affordable public health facilities collapsed under the weight of what many say was a man-made humanitarian catastrophe.

While schools have partially opened, no meaningful education has taken place because of lack of resources, pushing under-privileged children into early employment and crime.

The Convention stipulates, among other things, that governments should take steps to eradicate child labour.

Speaking at the same Anniversary, Vice President Joice Mujuru described Zimbabwe as a country

whose environment discourages child labour- perhaps official commemorative statements reflecting the distance between the officialdom and the situation on the ground.

Take 11-year old Musa Chitetanya's case for example. Everyday he wakes before dawn to sell wares at Mupedzanhamo, while his more privileged peers prepare for class.

In the evening, nightclub doormen are Musa's best friends. He mingles and mixes with roughish late night drinkers as he tries to sell a cigarette.

"I can sell here all night if I bribe the doorman with three cigarettes. I want to go to school but the money is not enough because I have to help look after the family," he says, trying to hussle us a cigarette at the same time.

Musa, an orphan living in a child headed family, reflects the desperate situation of thousands other children, mostly affected by HIV/Aids.

"One quarter of Zimbabwean children are orphans," Dr Salama said, noting that HIV/ Aids was the biggest killer of children.

"Studies have shown that orphans, especially girls, are less likely to receive health care, attend school, or have clothes to wear and more likely to have psychological problems and at higher risk of sexual abuse.

"Data released by the Family Support Trust clinic at Harare Central Hospital indicate that 30 000 children were treated for sexual abuse in the past four years," Dr Salama said.

AG accused of being partisan

HARARE-Alec Muchadehama, a prominent human rights lawyer has accused the Attorney General's Office of being biased after it invoked the iniquitous Section 121 of the Criminal Procedure and Evidence Act (CPEA) to deny bail to Pascal Gwezere, the MDC transport manager.

High Court Judge Justice Charles Hungwe last Friday granted bail to Gwezere, who is facing charges of stealing firearms from Pomona Barracks last month. Justice Hungwe ruled that the State's evidence was so tenuous that it would not pass the admissibility test.



The invoker - Tawanda Zvekare

Gwezere faces charges of unlawful entry and theft into and from Pomona Army Barracks One Engineers Support Regiment Armoury respectively, on 20 October 2009 together with a lady only identified as Getrude and several army officers to steal 20 AK-47 rifles and a shotgun, which they took to an unknown destination.

Justice Hungwe said Gwezere was entitled to enjoy his liberty since the right to liberty was one of the fundamental rights that should not be interfered with.

But, in what has become a worrying trend, prosecutor Tawanda Zvekare immediately invoked Section 121 of the CPEA, which has the effect of suspending the bail ruling for seven days while the State decides on filing an appeal.

Gwezere's lawyer Alec Muchadehama told *The Legal Monitor* that the invocation of Section 121 of the CPEA was an abuse of the law.

"It has been abused since 2000 against MDC activists and other people whom the State doesn't like," said Muchadehama.

He wondered why the AG's Office did not invoke the infamous piece of legislation when Chitungwiza area prosecutor Andrew Kumire sought bail recently after he was imprisoned for five days by former Harare Magistrate Chiwoniso Mutongi for contempt of court.

"It is abuse of the law process to harass opponents of ZANU PF. There is selective application not only of that Section but of the law itself," said Muchadehama.

Meanwhile, Zvekare and another law officer, Michael Mugabe, last week claimed that the police had recovered firearms that were stolen from Pomona Army Barracks by Gwezere.

They told Justice Hungwe during a bail application hearing for Gwezere last Thursday that the police have recovered the missing weapons and had arrested more people in connection with the theft of the firearms.

"The arms have since been recovered and more arrests have been made and are to be made as Chief Superintendent (Charles) Ngirishi will highlight," read part of the State's response to Gwezere's bail application.

Ngirishi is the Officer Commanding Criminal Investigations Department (CID) Law and Order, as well as the investigating officer in Gwezere's case. The State said the arrested suspects are implicating Gwezere as their accomplice and would appear in court facing the same charges.

Gwezere, who was abducted last month by State security agents is yet to be examined by doctors of his choice for injuries sustained after being tortured during his *incommunicado* detention. This is despite a court order authorising Gwezere to receive private medical treatment.

DRC envoy remarks 'unhelpful'

HARARE-Civic society organisations say the Democratic Republic of the Congo's (DRC) ambassador to Zimbabwe's "unhelpful" stance against NGOs involvement in politics is out of line with statutes governing the region.

Officiating at a donation ceremony in Shamva last week, Ambassador Mawapanga Mwanananga said NGOs should stop "interfering" in politics, a position civic society representatives said was inconsistent with SADC principles.

A Treaty signed by SADC Heads of States obligates governments to ensure active participation by civic society in governance matters. This assists in checking excesses such as corruption and outright dictatorship.

SADC Treaty Article 23 reads as follows:

1. "In pursuance of the objectives of this Treaty, SADC shall seek to involve fully, the people of the Region and key stakeholders in the process of regional integration.
2. SADC shall co-operate with, and support the initiatives of the peoples of the Region and key stakeholders, contributing to the objectives of this Treaty in the areas of co-operation in order to foster closer relations among the communities, associations and people of the Region.
3. for the purposes of this article, key stakeholders include:
 - a. private sector;
 - b. civil society;
 - c. non -governmental organisations; and
 - d. Workers and employers organizations."

More shocking, civic society said in a statement, was that Mwanananga's country is chairman of the 15-nation bloc that is expected to solve Zimbabwe's political impasse.

SADC chairman and Mwanananga's own President, Joseph Kabila, has committed himself

to ensuring the full implementation of the Inter-Party Agreement, which includes an end to rights abuses.

"It is not difficult to understand the important role that civil society organizations play in fulfilling these objectives, whether in Zimbabwe, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, or in any other country in the world," read the statement signed by Women's Trust, the National Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (NANGO) and Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR).

Women's Trust works to create spaces for women and opportunities for women and men to participate equally in decision-making, while ZLHR comprises over 100 rights lawyers countrywide. NANGO is an umbrella body representing over 120 humanitarian, political and faith groups working to enhance social, economic and political development in Zimbabwe.

Local and international civic society groups have been instrumental in highlighting the continued use of police and the judicial system to harass dissenting voices.

In the latest effort to lobby for more freedoms in Zimbabwe, African civic society organisations attending the ongoing African Commission on Peoples' and Human Rights session in The Gambia have included Zimbabwe in a resolution they want discussed at the summit.

Civil society members, including labour leaders have come under renewed attack in Zimbabwe, suffering abductions, arrests and prosecution in the past month.

Mwanananga this month cancelled a meeting with civic society, thereby "missing a valuable opportunity to interact with and learn from organisations that have been engaged in Zimbabwe for many years".

"We call to Ambassador Mwanananga's attention the stated objectives of the SADC Treaty, which include the 'consolidation, defence, and maintenance of democracy, peace, security and stability,' as set out in Article 5 of the Treaty," read the statement.