

Third Pre-Election Survey Mission Statement

The Carter Center of
Emory University

National Democratic Institute
for International Affairs

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Introduction

It is a great pleasure for me to be back in Zambia, particularly at this historic time. This is an era of great and positive change. Central to this transformation in world affairs is the movement to multiparty democracy. Free and fair elections in Zambia and a peaceful and stable result will of course be critical to Zambia's future. Such an outcome here will also have a major effect on developments in the region, including in South Africa. I know your brothers and sisters in South Africa are closely watching the unfolding of the democratic process here in Zambia.

Thus it is a great honor for myself and the Carter Center and the National Democratic Institute to have been invited to take part as observers. When President Carter asked me to undertake this mission, I saw it as an opportunity to contribute at least modestly to the decision of the Zambian people to move to a multiparty system. Obviously, the elections are entirely a Zambian exercise. International observers come because all the parties invite them. Their role is a limited one. It is to verify that elections were in fact free and fair and thus to legitimize the outcome in the eyes of the people as well as of the international community.

To make a clear and convincing judgement, the observers must have credibility, and this means that they must systematically examine the entire process, including the election laws and procedures, the registration process, the campaign atmosphere, the polling mechanics, and finally the tabulation of the results.

The Atmosphere

We have found encouraging progress on a number of fronts, particularly electoral procedures. But, there are still serious concerns expressed by Zambians about specific elements in the process. In addition, close monitoring of the implementation of electoral procedures will be primary task of local and international observers. Basically, however, we believe the prospects for free and fair elections are increasingly encouraging.

I will report to President Carter that many safeguards have been accepted by the Director of Elections that, if implemented, would partially offset the absences of a preliminary count at the polling sites. These safeguards, if implemented, would enable local and international monitors to detect significant fraud after the fact. The political parties, we believe, should now encourage all Zambian citizens to exercise their right and their civic duty to vote. The Electoral Commission should make every effort to ensure that the regulations and procedures facilitate the exercise of that right.

As the campaign enters its final stage, there is an inevitable heating up of emotions. Unfortunately, this can get out of hand and threaten the fundamental objective of democratic elections — a peaceful resolution of conflicting political views within a society. We were disturbed to hear charges and counter charges of intimidation and political violence. Free and fair elections are critical to the future of Zambia, but so also is the spirit of plural democracy that requires tolerance, compromise and a willingness to accept the verdict of the people.

The participants in this democratic contest in Zambia must not only have an equal opportunity to present their views but they all have an obligation to avoid inflammatory language and to condemn violence and the threat of violence. Democracy requires a political culture that includes not only open competition for political power but also moderation and civility.

President Kaunda has made several important commitments to a peaceful process. He has reiterated that he will accept the decision of the people. Moreover, he categorically affirmed to our delegation on television that he would not implement restrictive measures under the state of emergency and that he is willing to issue a statement to that effect. Accepting the views of a citizen monitoring group, which recently met with him, he agreed to withdraw a UNIP television

advertisement that the monitors felt was inappropriate. MMD leaders said that they have long supported the idea of a code of conduct for all political parties.

We were encouraged to learn that the two local monitoring groups, the Zambia Independent Monitoring Group (ZIMT) and the Zambian Election Monitoring Coordination Committee (ZEMCC) are both exerting efforts to create a nonviolent atmosphere. Zambian students and churches have played a leading role in building a national consensus that understands and supports the give-and-take of plural democracy. Through their efforts and that of the political parties and the Zambian government we saw earlier a number of promising developments, including the compromise agreement among the parties on a new constitution, the establishment of an Inter-Party Liaison Committee, and the creation of the independent monitoring groups.

The political parties, particularly UNIP and MMD, now have a heavy responsibility to reverse the budding atmosphere of threats, including limitations of vindictive action by the winner after the elections. We hope that the churches and the citizens groups will succeed in using their great energy and dedication to encourage the parties to move decisively. These groups are trying to encourage a dialogue and a code of conduct among the parties. In such a code, we would hope that the parties would pledge not to tolerate violence, intimidation, or inflammatory language and to respect the results of free and fair elections.

Recently we have seen an improvement in the relative balance of the amount of time devoted to the two main political parties in news broadcasts. However, these improvements have been erratic and there are still complaints that, in quality and selection of coverage, news reporting is not as unbiased as it should be. We hope the positive trend will not be reversed. We call on all journalists and editors in the print and electronic media to be equitable in their political reporting and above all to avoid inflammatory reporting.

Meanwhile, media on all sides appear to have avoided covering the campaigns of the 12 women candidates, both UNIP and MMD. How many journalists here know the names of most of these women candidates? Women are the majority voters in Zambia, and I would hope to see much more attention to the few women candidates that

there are in the contest. Hopefully in future years there will be many more women candidates.

Zambia is a large country. Thus the success of the international observers will depend in good measure upon the work of party pollwatchers and the independent monitoring groups. In a short time, two citizen groups have made impressive progress toward the organization and training of a vast monitoring effort. These groups, to which I referred earlier, are the Zambia Independent Monitoring Team and the Zambian Elections Monitoring Coordinating Committee. It is good news that ZIMT and ZEMCC intend to cooperate in this noble cause.

Conclusions

To sum up, there are encouraging developments in the electoral process. While strong differences remain among the parties on some procedures, it is our feeling that the prospects are improving for free and fair elections. We are most disturbed, however, over the building atmosphere of intimidation and threat. We again urge both the parties and all Zambians of goodwill to exert every effort to have a clean and peaceful campaign and thus assure that the Zambian example will indeed be one that inspires the people of Africa and the world.

Finally, I would like to express my appreciation to President Kaunda, the Zambian government, the political parties and all of the other many Zambians who extended to us the warm hospitality and friendship of their country.