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ZAMBIA 2026 GENERAL ELECTIONS

COMPENDIUM OF ELECTION OBSERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS

*Consolidated from Preliminary Statements
of Election Observation Missions*



ABBREVIATIONS

African Union

Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa

Christian Churches Monitoring Group

Civil Society Organisation

Electoral Commission of Zambia

Election Observation Mission

Election Support Network of Southern Africa

European Union

Independent Broadcasting Authority

International Conference on the Great Lakes Region

Mixed Member Proportional Representation

Southern African Development Community

Electoral Commissions Forum

SADC Electoral Observation Mission

Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation

Zambia National Women's Lobby

AU

COMESA

CCMG

CSO

ECZ

EOM

ESN-SA

EU

IBA

ICGLR

MMPR

SADC

SADC SADC ECF / ECF-SADC

SEOM

ZNBC

ZNWL

INTRODUCTION

The 2026 Zambia General Elections provided an opportunity to assess the country's electoral and democratic processes and to identify areas requiring further strengthening. After the elections, several international, regional, and domestic Election Observation Missions (EOMs) issued preliminary statements highlighting key observations and areas for improvement.

Elections remain a cornerstone of democratic governance, providing citizens with an opportunity to exercise their political rights and participate in determining the leadership and direction of their country. The 2026 General Elections in Zambia were held against a backdrop of significant electoral and legal reforms and provided important experiences and lessons for further strengthening the country's electoral processes.

01

This Compendium brings together the preliminary recommendations arising from the African Union and Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa EOM (AU-COMESA), the Southern African Development Community EOM (SEOM), the Election Support Network of Southern Africa (ESN-SA), the Christian Churches Monitoring Group (CCMG) and the Zambia National Women's Lobby (ZNWL).

The European Union (EU), the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), and the SADC Electoral Commissions Forum (SADC ECF) did not include preliminary recommendations in their statements and are therefore not reflected in the recommendations contained in this Compendium.

02

The Compendium consolidates the recommendations, providing a practical reference for electoral reform and democratic governance in Zambia. While the recommendations originate from different observation missions, they collectively identify areas where improvements can contribute to more transparent, inclusive, accountable, credible and resilient electoral processes.

The purpose of the Compendium is to support continued dialogue and reform beyond the electoral cycle. It encourages the Government of Zambia, the Electoral Commission of Zambia (ECZ), political parties, Parliament, civil society organisations, and other relevant stakeholders to consider and implement the recommendations within their respective mandates.

03

The Compendium is therefore intended not merely as a record of observations, but as a tool for advocacy, monitoring, and follow-up. It provides a basis for tracking progress in implementing electoral reforms and encourages stakeholders to sustain momentum and improvements ahead of future electoral processes. Effective implementation of these recommendations can strengthen electoral institutions, enhance public confidence in elections, protect political and electoral rights, and ultimately build stronger and more inclusive democratic institutions in Zambia.

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RECOMENDATIONS

THEMATIC AREA	RECOMMENDATIONS	RESPONSIBLE	EOM
Electoral Legal Framework and Reform	Ensure electoral and constitutional reforms are undertaken through broad-based stakeholder consultations.	Parliament; Government; ECZ; Political Parties; CSOs	AU-COMESA; SADC SEOM
	Enact electoral legislation sufficiently in advance of elections to allow adequate implementation, stakeholder preparation, training and civic/voter education.	Parliament; Government;	AU-COMESA; SADC SEOM; ESN-SA
	Review the quota-determination framework under the Electoral Process Act so that parliamentary and local-government votes, and not only presidential vote totals, are taken into account when allocating proportional-representation seats.	Parliament; ECZ	SADC SEOM; ESN-SA; ZNWL
	Enact a gender-responsive political parties' law requiring inclusive leadership and candidate selection, equitable campaign resources, protection from gender-based violence, disaggregated reporting, independent oversight and penalties for non-compliance, addressing the current gap in which parties are regulated only under the general-purpose Societies Act.	Parliament	ZNWL
	Review and strengthen legal provisions governing the withdrawal or resignation of candidates close to polling day, to minimise administrative uncertainty and safeguard electoral transparency and predictability.	Parliament	ESN-SA
Political Parties and Campaign Finance	Strengthen internal party democracy by ensuring transparent, competitive and inclusive candidate-selection processes.	Parliament; Government Political Parties	AU-COMESA; ZNWL
	Adopt and enforce zero-tolerance policies on political and gender-based violence, harassment and hate speech, including online abuse, with confidential reporting, survivor-centred protection, impartial investigations, effective sanctions and public, sex-disaggregated case data.	Political Parties	ZNWL
	Prioritise enacting legislation regulating the registration, management, funding, and accountability of political parties.	Parliament; Government	AU-COMESA; SEOM

RECOMENDATIONS

THEMATIC AREA	RECOMMENDATIONS	RESPONSIBLE	EOM
Electoral Commission Independence and Institutional Governance	Review the process for appointing ECZ Commissioners to ensure it commands confidence across the political spectrum.	Government; Parliament; Political Parties; CSOs	SEOM
	Strengthen stakeholder confidence in the independence, impartiality and professionalism of the ECZ through appropriate reforms.	Government; Parliament; ECZ	SEOM
	Conduct a comprehensive post-election evaluation of the 2026 elections to identify what worked, what did not work and areas requiring improvement.	ECZ	AU-COMESA
Delimitation	Establish a clear legal framework governing constituency delimitation, including objective criteria, population quotas with permissible variances, and statutory timelines for publication and public consultation.	Parliament; Government	AU-COMESA
Media and Freedom of Expression	Review cyber-related legislation to ensure consistency with constitutional guarantees and regional and international obligations on freedom of expression.	Government; Parliament	SEOM
	Ensure fair and consistent coverage of women candidates and women voters when reporting on electoral processes and governance issues.	Parliament; Government Political Parties	AU-COMESA; ZNWL
	Ensure equitable, balanced, accurate and impartial coverage of all political contestants throughout the electoral cycle.	Media; ZNBC; IBA	AU-COMESA; SEOM
	Ensure equitable access to publicly owned media for all political contestants.	ZNBC; IBA	AU-COMESA; SADC SEOM

RECOMENDATIONS

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Campaign Environment and Use of Public Resources	Ensure that the campaign timetable applies equally to all contestants, including an incumbent who is also a candidate.	Government; ECZ; Parliament	SADC; SEOM
	Clearly define in law the distinction between official government duties and campaign activities.	Parliament; Government	SADC; SEOM
	Refrain from inflammatory rhetoric, political violence and intimidation, and promote issue-based campaigns.	Political Parties; Candidates	AU-COMESA
Electoral Security and Political Violence	Address underlying causes of politically motivated violence and political tensions that undermine constitutionally guaranteed freedoms and rights.	Government; Political Parties; Security Agencies	AU-COMESA
	Strengthen conflict-management mechanisms at national and district levels.	ECZ; Political Parties; CSOs; Security Agencies	AU-COMESA; SADC; SEOM; ESN-SA
	Ensure electoral grievances are channelled through legally established dispute-resolution mechanisms.	Political Parties; Candidates; ECZ	AU-COMESA; ECF-SADC
	Continue to encourage supporters to maintain a peaceful environment throughout the announcement of results and the post-election period.	Political Parties; Candidates	ESN-SA
	Ensure that all allegations of electoral violence and intimidation are promptly investigated, with outcomes communicated transparently to complainants and the public.	Zambia Police Service	ESN-SA

RECOMENDATIONS

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Inclusion of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities	Take further measures to increase the participation of women, youth and persons with disabilities as electoral candidates.	Government; ECZ; Political Parties	SEOM
	Review registration, nomination and polling arrangements to ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities, in consultation with representative organisations.	ECZ; Government; Political Parties	SEOM
	Strengthen measures to ensure that the MMPR system effectively promotes representation of women, youth and persons with disabilities.	Parliament; ECZ; Political Parties	AU-COMESA
	Ensure transparent and inclusive processes for selecting candidates for proportional-representation lists.	Political Parties; Parliament; ECZ	AU-COMESA
Civic and Voter Education	Provide targeted voter education, particularly for young people, women, and persons with disabilities, with particular emphasis on new legal frameworks.	ECZ; CSOs	AU-COMESA; SEOM; ESN-SA; ZNWL
Polling Station Capacity and Accessibility	Increase the number of polling booths in line with the number of registered voters and consider a minimum of three booths per polling station.	ECZ	AU-COMESA
	Ensure polling stations are accessible to persons with disabilities and other voters requiring assistance.	ECZ	AU-COMESA; SADC SEOM
Voter Verification and Technology	Consider more efficient voter-verification mechanisms, such as biometric voter identification, to reduce delays and congestion.	ECZ	AU-COMESA; ESN-SA
	Consider using a single voter-verification document to speed up voter processing.	ECZ	AU-COMESA

RECOMENDATIONS

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Electoral Materials and Polling Staff	Improve planning and distribution of electoral materials to ensure they arrive well before polling day.	ECZ	SEOM
	Ensure adequate quantities of polling materials at all polling stations.	ECZ	SEOM
	Improve deployment planning and timely clearance and deployment of polling officials.	ECZ	SEOM
	Provide pre-printed ballot box labels at all polling stations to ensure consistency, accuracy, and standardisation.	ECZ	ESN-SA
Closing, Counting and Reconciliation	Ensure reconciliation of used unused and spoilt ballots is completed before counting begins.	ECZ; Presiding Officers	SEOM
	Ensure reconciliation figures are announced to party agents, observers and other persons present before counting commences.	ECZ	SEOM
	Ensure closing minutes are completed, and sensitive electoral materials are securely packaged before counting.	ECZ	SEOM
Secrecy and Integrity of the Ballot	Discontinue any practice whereby a voter's national registration number is recorded against or on the ballot paper.	ECZ	SEOM
	Ensure ballot-accounting procedures cannot be used to trace a ballot to an identifiable voter.	ECZ	SEOM
	Ensure polling booths are adequately provided and positioned to guarantee secrecy of the ballot.	ECZ	SEOM

RECOMMENDATIONS

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Results Management and Announcement	Ensure strict adherence to the legal framework governing counting, tabulation and announcement of results.	ECZ	AU-COMESA
	Provide regular, timely and detailed public updates on the results-management process.	ECZ	AU-COMESA
	Ensure transparent communication with stakeholders where operational or security challenges affect results management.	ECZ	AU-COMESA
	To improve public confidence and transparency in election results and the institution itself, the ECZ should publish the Record of Proceedings for the Totalling of votes in both presidential and constituency-based Member of Parliament elections.	ECZ	CCMG
	Refrain from premature and unlawful declarations of election results and allow the ECZ to complete the process.	Political Parties; Candidates	ESN-SA
Electoral Justice and Dispute Resolution	Ensure electoral grievances are addressed through established legal, judicial, and administrative mechanisms, with support for transparent, credible, and lawful counting, tabulation, and announcement of results.	Political Parties; Citizens	ESN-SA
	Strengthen the timely, consistent and impartial implementation of electoral dispute-resolution mechanisms.	Judiciary; ECZ	SEOM
Civil Society and Citizen Participation	Continue civic and voter education initiatives targeting women, youth, first-time voters and persons with disabilities.	CSOs; ECZ	AU-COMESA
	Continue engagement with state institutions and political actors to promote accountability, inclusion and democratic reforms.	CSOs	AU-COMESA
	Strengthen coordination and deployment planning to ensure equitable and comprehensive observer coverage across all polling stations.	CSOs	ESN-SA

RECOMENDATIONS

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Electoral Information and Transparency	Ensure voters' registers and other relevant electoral information are made available to stakeholders in a timely manner to facilitate verification and transparency.	ECZ	SEOM
	Implement a standard register at all polling stations to record the attendance of party agents, monitors, observers and other authorised visitors, for accountability and future reference in the event of electoral disputes.	ECZ	ESN-SA
	Make it mandatory for all party agents and monitors to display official identification badges at all times to facilitate recognition and prevent unauthorised individuals from being present at polling stations.	ECZ	ESN-SA
Electoral Administration and Institutional Learning	Conduct a comprehensive post-election review involving key stakeholders to identify operational, legal and administrative lessons.	ECZ	AU-COMESA
	Use findings from the post-election review to inform reforms and preparations for the next electoral cycle.	Political Parties; Candidates	AU-COMESA
Implementation and Follow-up	Establish a mechanism for tracking implementation of recommendations arising from the 2026 elections.	Political Parties; Citizens	Consolidated recommendation
	Develop an electoral reform roadmap with clear responsibilities and timeliness for implementing priority recommendations.	Judiciary; ECZ	Consolidated recommendation



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