



Press Release

Southern African Development Community condemns the use of the SADC brand image in the article titled, “*Stray and we will deport you: Charamba warns election observers*”

On 11 August 2023, in Gaborone, Botswana, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Secretariat noted with great concern a story captioned “*Stray and we will deport you: Charamba warns election observers*” which attributed to the Herald Newspaper of Zimbabwe, and which appeared on the online “*newsdzezimbabwe*” website on 9 August 2023.

The story is accompanied by a photographic image of an individual dressed in the SADC Election Observation Mission (SEOM) regalia. The article alleges ulterior motives and pro-opposition agenda by foreign election observers reported to have deployed to Zimbabwe for the forthcoming elections scheduled for 23 August 2023. The story also mentions specific institutions and observers who are said to have deployed to Zimbabwe to discredit the country’s elections. None of the institutions or individuals named are linked with SADC or SADC’s official election observation mission (the SEOM). The use of the image of an individual wearing the SADC election observation regalia in the story, unfortunately, associates SADC with the observers who the story alleges “are audaciously interfering in the country’s electoral processes”. The use of the SADC branded image to accompany this story places SADC in a negative context and has the unfortunate potential of putting personnel in the service of SADC at risk.

The SADC Election Observation Mission (SEOM) is part of the SADC structures, which belong to the SADC Member States and the people of the SADC Region. It is an impartial peer-review mechanism that aims to enhance the electoral processes of the region by ensuring that all Member States adhere to specific electoral standards in the conduct of their elections. At this stage, the SEOM has not yet deployed any observers to Zimbabwe, and a public announcement will be made at the appropriate time to advise all stakeholders of the presence of SADC election observers in the country.

The SADC Secretariat, therefore, calls upon the publishers of the aforementioned story to retract the use of the SADC brand and issue a public apology disassociating SADC from the story's context.

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SADC is an organisation of 16 Member States established in 1980 as the Southern African Development Coordinating Conference (SADCC) and later, in August, 1992 transformed into the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The mission of SADC is to promote sustainable and equitable economic growth and socio-economic development through efficient, productive systems, deeper cooperation and integration, good governance and durable peace and security; so that the region emerges as a competitive and effective player in international relations and the world economy. Member States are Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

**Issued by the SADC Secretariat
Gaborone, Botswana**

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