



MEDIA RELEASE

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) Electoral Observer Mission (SEOM) to the General Elections to be held in the Kingdom of Lesotho on May 26, 2012 was launched this afternoon (May 12, 2012) at the Lesotho Sun Hotel in Maseru.

The launch follows an invitation extended by the Independent Electoral Commission of the Kingdom of Lesotho to the Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation and President of the Republic of South Africa, H.E Jacob Zuma to mandate the SADC Executive Secretary to lead the process of constituting and deploying the SEOM to the General Elections in the Kingdom.

The invitation to SADC to observe elections in the Kingdom of Lesotho demonstrates the commitment of the Kingdom to the consolidation of democracy in the SADC Region in general and in the Kingdom of Lesotho in particular.

It is also in line with Article 5 of the SADC Treaty which commits Member States to “promote common political values, systems and other shared values which are transmitted through institutions which are democratic, legitimate and effective” and to consolidate, defend and maintain democracy, peace, security and stability” in the SADC Region.

The holding of the General Elections in the Kingdom of Lesotho on May 26 is a true testimony that SADC Member States have rooted and entrenched democratic values and practices in the quest to enhance and consolidate democracy and democratic institutions in the region.

SEOM observation will be undertaken in three phases, namely, the pre-election period, election-day and post-election phases. SEOM's presence in the Kingdom of Lesotho is to ensure that the provisions of the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections are adhered to in the conduct of democratic elections. It is also to convey a message of solidarity to the people of Lesotho and to render the necessary support to the ongoing democratic process in the Kingdom of Lesotho.

SADC is mindful of the fact that the challenge and responsibility to have peaceful, free and fair elections in the Kingdom of Lesotho lies in the hands of the people of the Kingdom. We believe that everything should be done to ensure that the process assures voters and those to be voted for, to honourably accept the outcome of the elections. SADC therefore encourages the people of the Kingdom of Lesotho to continue to demonstrate political maturity and responsibility by respecting democratic principles and practices.

As of 12 May 2012, sixty-three (63) SADC Observers from the SADC Secretariat, Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania and Zimbabwe were on the ground ready to be deployed in all the Districts of the Kingdom of Lesotho.

Deployment takes place on 13 May 2012 and a total of about 100 SADC Observers are expected to be on the ground.

The launching of the SADC Electoral Observer Mission to the Kingdom of Lesotho was attended by Chairperson of the Independent Electoral Commission of the Kingdom of Lesotho, international electoral observer missions to the Kingdom of Lesotho, leaders and representatives of political parties, members of the diplomatic corps, leaders and representatives of the religious community, representatives of civil society organisations and members of the media.

The mission was launched by the Head of SEOM, Mr. Ebrahim Ismael Ebrahim, Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of South Africa. SADC Executive Secretary, Dr. Thomaz T. Salomao also addressed the mission.

12 May 2012

Maseru

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