



**SADC ELECTORAL OBSERVATION MISSION TO
THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

BY

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AND

HEAD OF THE SADC ELECTORAL OBSERVATION MISSION

TO

THE 7TH MAY, 2014 NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS

IN THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA,

9TH MAY, 2014

Pretoria, Republic of South Africa

Sheraton Hotel

Your Excellency Mr. John Kufour, former President of the Republic of Ghana and Head of the AU Observer Mission,

Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Relations of the Kingdom of Lesotho,

Honourable Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the United Republic of Tanzania,

Head of the Commonwealth Observer Mission,

Executive Secretary of SADC,

Madam Chairperson of the IEC,

Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Members of the media,

Ladies and gentlemen

I wish to welcome you at this media conference and thank you for honouring our invitation this early in the morning.

It is an established practice for SADC Member States to observe elections in the region as part of regional efforts to strengthen democracy. SADC regards elections as an important component of the region's democratic dispensation.

In observing elections, SADC Electoral Observation Mission (**SEOM**) assesses the extent to which the electoral process was credible, peaceful, transparent, free and fair as provided for in the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing the conduct of Democratic Elections.

Consistent with the established practice, the South African Government invited SADC to send an Observation Mission to the 2014 National and Provincial Elections.

His Excellency Hifikepunye Pohamba, President of the Republic of Namibia and Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security officially constituted the Observation Mission and mandated the SADC Executive Secretary to facilitate the deployment of the Mission.

President Pohamba appointed me in my capacity as Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Namibia to head the SADC Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM) to South Africa.

The Mission arrived on 21 April 2014 and observers underwent a two - day refresher training course. The Mission consisted of 188 observers who were deployed in all nine provinces of South Africa. The Mission was preceded by the SADC Electoral Advisory Council (SEAC) assessment mission that took place from 26 to 29 March 2014, to assess the level of preparedness and readiness of the country to hold the

2014 National and Provincial Elections. The SEOM was assisted by the SADC Electoral Advisory Council (SEAC) during the election period.

SEOM consulted different stakeholders in fulfilment of its mandate in order to gather information on various aspects of the electoral process. Interactions with these stakeholders greatly assisted SEOM to understand the legal framework and political environment of the country.

SEOM observed that electoral campaigns were generally peaceful. Contesting parties demonstrated political tolerance and maturity. However, there were incidents of inflammatory statements made by some parties that were inconsistent with Section 99 of the Electoral Code of Conduct. SEOM also noted that there were sporadic incidents of violence and intimidation during campaigns in some provinces. Some of these incidents were related to service delivery protests and industrial actions.

Access to public media is one of the key principles governing democratic elections in the SADC region. During the electoral campaign, SEOM noted that air-time was equitably allocated to political parties by the public broadcaster, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) on the basis of their representation in the National Parliament. SEOM also noted that political parties were invited by the public broadcaster to participate in debates.

SEOM noted that the Independent Electoral Commission conducted its work of managing the elections in a transparent and professional manner. SEOM noted the presence of political party agents at voting stations, as well as domestic and international observers deployed throughout the country.

SEOM teams observed both the opening and closing of the voting stations and noted that the procedures were in conformity with the provisions of the Electoral Law of South Africa. SEOM teams also observed that voting materials such as ballot papers, ballot boxes, voters' roll, indelible ink, were in place at the various voting stations visited. However, SEOM also observed that not all the materials were delivered on time which resulted in delays of the opening of some voting stations.

Furthermore, the layout of voting stations enabled easy flow of the voting. The perimeters were also clearly marked with directions. Throughout the exercise, SEOM observed that the flow of voters was generally orderly and the voting continued until all voters who were in queue at the voting stations before the closing time, were allowed to cast their votes. SEOM observed that voters who needed assistance were assisted to cast their votes.

SEOM observed that counting started immediately after the closing of the voting stations. The prescribed counting procedures were adhered to.

SEOM also observed that political party agents as well as domestic and international observers were present during the voting and counting process.

The SEOM also observed that counting officers announced the results immediately after counting as provided for in the Electoral Act.

CONCLUSION

SEOM observed that despite some short-comings and concerns, such as the late opening of some of the voting stations, delay of the delivery of some voting materials, and sporadic incidents of violence, such short-comings and concerns are not of such magnitude as to affect the credibility of the overall electoral process.

Guided by the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections, SEOM concludes that the 2014 National and Provincial Elections were peaceful, free, fair, transparent and credible, reflecting the will of the people of South Africa.

SEOM urges all political parties, and other stakeholders, to respect the will of the people in line with the Laws of the Republic of South Africa, and the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections. Any complaint relating to the electoral process should be referred to relevant legal dispute settlement mechanism of the country.

Finally, on behalf of the SEOM, I would like to express our gratitude to the people of the Republic of South Africa for their warm welcome and cooperation during the work of our mission.

Thank you for your attention.