



**STATEMENT ON THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE  
SADC ELECTORAL OBSERVER MISSION (SEOM) TO  
THE GENERAL ELECTIONS**

**IN  
THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO**

**BY  
DR. TOMÁZ AUGUSTO SALOMÃO  
EXECUTIVE-SECRETARY OF SADC**

**MASERU, 12 MAY 2012**

- **HON. EBRAHIM ISMAIL EBRAHIM, DEPUTY-MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA AND HEAD OF THE SADC ELECTORAL OBSERVER MISSION (SEOM);**
  
- **THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE INDEPENDENT ELECTORAL COMMISSION OF THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO;**
  
- **INTERNATIONAL ELECTORAL OBSERVER MISSIONS TO THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO;**
  
- **YOUR EXCELLENCIES, HEADS OF DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS ACCREDITED TO THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO;**
  
- **DESTINGUISHED MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS;**
  
- **LEADERS AND REPRESENTATIVES OF POLITICAL PARTIES;**
  
- **LEADERS AND REPRESENTATIVES OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY;**
  
- **ESTEEMED REPRESENTATIVES OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS;**
  
- **MEMBERS OF THE MEDIA;**
  
- **LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.**

It is a privilege and honor for me to welcome you to this august assembly on occasion of the launch of the SADC Electoral Observer Mission (SEOM) to the General Elections in the Kingdom of Lesotho. I also take this opportunity to express our appreciation for gracing this event through your presence here today.

The General Elections to be held in the Kingdom of Lesotho, on 26 May 2012, constitute another significant milestone not only for the country but also for the region, since it marks a new era after a successful completion, in 2011, of the political dialogue as part of a resolution process fully supported and facilitated by SADC.

Indeed, the mediation initiated under the auspices of the Eminent Person, Sir Ketumile Masire, former President of Botswana AND concluded under the eegis of the Christian Council of Lesotho (CCL) with the facilitation of SADC was able to bring the disputing parties together for dialogue and yield tangible and significant results, namely the Agreement that led to constitutional and electoral reforms, thus paving the way for the forthcoming General Elections in Lesotho.

As a matter of fact, these General Elections in Lesotho are true testimony that SADC Member States have rooted and entrenched democratic values and practices in the quest for enhancement and consolidation of the democracy and democratic institutions in the region.

The region has made significant achievements in strengthening the democracy, democratic principles and institutions, whereby the participation of the citizens plays a central role. The Constitutions of all SADC Member States already provide principles for equal opportunities and full participation of the citizens in the political and decision-making processes.

It is against this background and in accordance with the provisions of the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections that the Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho invited the SADC to observe the

General Elections scheduled for 26 May 2012. To that effect, the Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, the President of the Republic of South Africa, mandated me, as the Executive Secretary of SADC, to lead the process of constituting and deploying the SADC Electoral Observer Mission (SEOM) to the General Elections in this country.

The presence of SADC is once again to convey a message of solidarity to the people and render the necessary support to the ongoing democratic process in the Kingdom of Lesotho.

Today's ceremony is of significance, being the enhancement of democracy and governance, fundamental, for peace and stability in the region for the achievement of the ultimate goal of economic growth and sustainable development, which will lead to the poverty eradication. In another words, to improve the standards of living and quality of life for the people not only of Lesotho but also of entire Southern African Region.

It is worthwhile to state that the presence of SADC here today is also to ensure that the provisions of the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections are adhered to in the conduct of democratic elections.

In this regard, the SADC Electoral Observer Mission (SEOM) will deploy a sizeable number of observers from the SADC Member States as well as from SADC Diplomatic Missions accredited to the Kingdom of Lesotho, as it has been in the past, thus, allowing the Mission to cover extensively all electoral process in the country before, during and after the polling day.

Furthermore, the conduct of the Mission will be guided by the relevant legislation of the Kingdom of Lesotho and international, namely:

- the Constitution;
- the National Assembly Electoral Act;

- AU Declaration on the Principles Governing Democratic Elections in Africa;
- AU Guidelines for African Union Electoral Observation and Monitoring Missions;
- the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation; and
- the Code of Conduct for International Election Observers.

Aiming at enhancing reliability and validity of its findings, the SADC Electoral Observer Mission (SEOM) will share information with other Electoral Observer Missions in the country. In this respect, consultations with stakeholders involved in the process will be ongoing and a permanent undertaking of the Mission in order to be seized with the electoral environment and momentum.

To exercise the right to vote and to be voted for through universal suffrage is a genuine way for the true participation of citizens in the political process and the decision on their future.

Now, as we are heading towards the 'polling day', the challenge and responsibility to have peaceful, free and fair elections lies on the hands of the people of the Lesotho. The process must assure voters and those voted for, to honorably accept the people's verdict. We therefore encourage the people of the Kingdom of Lesotho to continue to demonstrate political maturity and responsibility by respecting democratic principles and practices.

I am also pleased to announce that as mandated by the Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, I as the Executive Secretary have established an Office and designated my Secretariat officials to support the SADC Electoral Observer Mission (SEOM) and the Head of the Mission. To that effect the activities of the SADC Electoral Observer Mission (SEOM) will be conducted here at:

**LESOTHO SUN INTERNATIONAL  
MASERU**

In conclusion, it is our hope that after the electoral observation exercise, we will come together again here at the same venue for the Mission to communicate its preliminary Statement and findings.

With these remarks, it is now my honor and privilege to introduce and invite the Representative of His Excellency Jacob G. Zuma, President of the Republic of South Africa and Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, Head of the SADC Electoral Observer Mission to the 2012 General Elections in the Kingdom of Lesotho, Honourable Ebrahim Ismail Ebrahim, Deputy-Minister International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of South Africa to now officially launch the mission.

Thank you very much

Merci beaucoup

Muito obrigado

Ke ea leboha