



**SADC ELECTORAL OBSERVATION MISSION TO
THE REPUBLIC OF MALAWI**

STATEMENT

BY

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**MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF
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AND

**HEAD OF THE SADC ELECTORAL OBSERVATION
MISSION**

TO

THE 20TH MAY, 2014 TRIPARTITE ELECTIONS

IN THE REPUBLIC OF MALAWI

24TH MAY, 2014

Blantyre, Republic of Malawi

Your Excellency Dr. Sam Nujoma, Founding President of the Republic of Namibia and Head of the AU Observer Mission,

Your Excellency Lt. Gen. Mompoti Merafe, Former Vice President of the Republic of Botswana and Head of the Commonwealth Observer Mission,

The representative of the SADC Executive Secretary

Chairperson of the Malawi Electoral Commission,

Heads of the International Observer Missions,

Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Members of the media,

Ladies and gentlemen

A. Introduction

I wish to welcome you to this meeting whose objective is to release the statement of the SADC Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM), on the 2014 Tripartite Elections in Republic of Malawi.

It is an established tradition for SADC Member States to observe elections in the region, as part of regional efforts to enhance and consolidate democracy, and improve the quality of our electoral processes.

The Government of the Republic Malawi invited SADC to send an Observation Mission to the 2014 Tripartite Elections consistent with the SADC Guidelines and Principles Governing Democratic Elections.

Accordingly, His Excellency Hifikepunye Pohamba, President of the Republic of Namibia and Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation officially constituted the Observation Mission and appointed me, in my capacity as Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Namibia, to head the SEOM to Malawi.

To that effect, President Pohamba mandated the SADC Executive Secretary to facilitate the SEOM deployment.

The SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections call for Member States to adhere to the full participation of citizens in the political process, freedom of association, political tolerance, equal opportunity for all political parties to access the state media, equal opportunity to

exercise the right to vote and to be voted for, the impartiality of the electoral institutions and voter's education, among others.

The SADC Principles further provide that any challenge to the election results should be done in accordance with the laws of the country.

The SADC Electoral Observation Mission is therefore guided by the above mentioned principles.

B. Deployment

Ladies and Gentleman

SEOM arrived in Malawi on 1st May 2014. The observers underwent a two day refresher training course. The Mission consisted of 147 observers who were deployed in all three regions of Malawi. The deployment was preceded by the SADC Electoral Advisory Council (SEAC) goodwill and assessment mission that took place in April 2014, to assess the level of preparedness and readiness of the country to hold the elections.

SEOM familiarised itself with the constitution and the electoral laws of Malawi and held consultations with different stakeholders that provided usefull information to the mission about the political environment and the security situation in the country. Consultations with the Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) enabled SEOM to understand the institution's readiness to organize, manage and deliver credible elections.

C. Campaign period

SEOM witnessed several campaigns by different political parties. All the campaigns observed were held in a peaceful atmosphere which attests to the maturity and tolerance of the political players and the people of Malawi.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Some stakeholders expressed concern that the coverage by the Government owned Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) was disproportionately in favour of the governing party. However, SEOM was informed that in comparison with past elections in Malawi there was some improvement in the coverage of all political parties by the state media during this election.

D. Voting day

The environment on the polling day remained conducive to the holding of generally peaceful elections. However, there were unfounded rumours of rigging which had the potential of poisoning that peaceful environment.

SEOM observed that while some polling stations opened on time in conformity with the provision of the electoral law, there were prolonged delays in starting the voting process at some of the polling stations.

The delays were caused by logistical challenges in the delivery of voting materials. As a result of these delays, there was disorderly conduct at some polling stations.

SEOM noted that the Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) has made good-faith efforts to ensure a fair and transparent

process and responded expeditiously to remedy situations that could compromise the integrity of the elections.

SEOM observed that when the voting started, throughout the exercise, the flow of voters was orderly and the voting continued until all voters in the queue at the closing time were allowed to cast their votes. Voters requiring assistance were helped to cast their votes.

SEOM also observed that political party agents, domestic monitors and international observers were present during voting and counting processes. The counting of votes started immediately after the closing of polling stations and the results were displayed in accordance with the provisions of the electoral law of Malawi.

E. Conclusion

Ladies and Gentlemen,

SEOM noted the concerns raised by some stakeholders, as mentioned above. Nonetheless, those concerns and shortcomings, were not of such gravity as to affect the integrity of the electoral process.

Guided by the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections, SEOM has concluded that the 2014 Tripartite Elections in the Republic of Malawi were peaceful, free, transparent and credible, reflecting the will of the people of Malawi.

In accordance with the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections, SEOM wishes to urge all political parties and candidates who contested these elections, to respect the will of the people. Thus, any complaints that may arise should be channelled through the relevant

authorities in accordance with the laws of the Republic of Malawi.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of His Excellency President Hifikepunye Pohamba, Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, allow me to commend the MEC for conducting and managing the 2014 tripartite elections in a transparent manner.

Finally, I congratulate the people and political leaders of Malawi and for their orderly and peaceful conduct during the elections as well as the high voter turn-out. This, indeed, is a great achievement in the consolidation of democracy, not only in Malawi, the Warm Heart of Africa, but also in the SADC sub-region and the continent.

I also express our sincere gratitude to the Government and the people of the Republic of Malawi for their friendship, hospitality and cooperation during our mission here. In the same vein I thank all the international observation missions for their cooperation.

The SEOM final report on the 2014 Tripartite Elections in the Republic of Malawi will be issued in thirty days after the announcement of the results.

Thank you for your attention