



STATEMENT

BY

**SADC EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
H.E. DR. STERGOMENA LAWRENCE TAX**

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE SADC
ELECTORAL OBSERVATION MISSION (SEOM) TO THE 2014
GENERAL ELECTIONS IN THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA**

**10TH OCTOBER 2014
GABORONE**

Honourable Maite Nkoana-Mashabane Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of South Africa, and Head of the SADC Electoral Observer Mission to the Elections in the Republic of Botswana;

Chairperson of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC);

Members of the Independent Electoral Commission;

Leaders and Representatives of Political Parties;

Members of the Elections Observation Missions;

Your Excellences, Heads of Diplomatic Missions accredited to the Republic of Botswana;

Religious leaders;

Members of the Civil Society;

Members of the media;

Ladies and gentlemen.

I am greatly honoured to welcome you to the launch of the SADC Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM) to the General Elections in the Republic of Botswana, scheduled for 24th October 2014. I wish to express our gratitude for your presence at this very important occasion. This launch is of great significance, as it demonstrates SADC's commitment to the enhancement of democracy and governance, peace and stability.

As our brothers and sisters of Botswana go to the polls to exercise their democratic rights, I wish to take this opportunity to pay tribute to His Excellency Seretse Khama, the Founding and late President of this great country for his wisdom and foresight that contributed to the formation of our regional organisation – SADC. In early 1977, at a meeting of the Frontline States in Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania, the late President Khama mooted the idea for the Frontline States to coordinate their disparate economies in order to be self-reliant.

This was followed by active consultations, culminating in a meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Frontline States in Gaborone, in May 1979, which called for a meeting of ministers responsible for economic development. In July, 1979 Ministers responsible for economic development in the Frontline States met in Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania and produced a blueprint, leading to the birth of the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC) in 1980.

I make reference to the vision of H.E. the late President Seretse Khama in order to illustrate the important that we at SADC attach to the legacy that our Forefathers, the founders of the Frontline and SADC bequeathed to us – the spirit of solidarity and unity of action and purpose.

Your presence here today, conveys the message of solidarity to the people of Botswana and support for the democratic dispensation in Botswana in particular, and the SADC Region in general. The SADC Electoral Observer Mission (SEOM) is 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.

Honourable Minister,

The Republic of Botswana invited SADC to observe the 2014 General Elections. The invitation is in accordance with the provisions of the SADC Treaty, the SADC Protocol on Political, Defence and Security Cooperation and the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections. Accordingly, the Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, His Excellency Jacob Zuma, President of the Republic of South Africa, constituted the SADC Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM) to observe the General Elections in Botswana.

We are here today to officially launch the SADC Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM) comprising of observers from SADC Member States who will be deployed across the country during the electoral period.

As SADC, we believe that for political stability and socio-economic development to take root in the region, there is need to entrench and consolidate democracy. We believe that the enhancement and consolidation of democracy and peace is a pre-requisite for development and should be done through the participation of the people in the political processes and governance. We believe that the full participation of all citizens in the democratic process is central to the success of democracy, and in upholding democratic values and principles.

Honourable Minister,

The **SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections**, the **African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance**, provide an important framework for the promotion of the universal values of democracy, good governance, rule of law and human rights in the region. I wish to take this opportunity to underscore the fact that the dissemination of democratic values and principles among all relevant stakeholders and society is the responsibility of all stakeholders.

The responsibility to have peaceful, free, fair and credible elections therefore lies in the hands of the people of Botswana. The election process must allow the people of Botswana to freely and peacefully choose their leaders, and to assure voters and those voted for, accept the people's voices. We encourage the people of the Republic of Botswana to continue to demonstrate political maturity and responsibility by respecting democratic principles and practices.

The forthcoming elections in the Republic of Botswana are a true testimony that Botswana and SADC Member States have entrenched democratic values and practices; with firm commitment to enhancing democracy and democratic institutions in our Region.

Honourable Minister,

The history of democracy in Botswana is longstanding. The first elections in this country were held about half a century ago.

Since then, democracy has been perfected and enhanced. It is worthwhile to state that the successful democratic experience of Botswana has been a source of inspiration for many countries of the region and the African continent.

Prior to the deployment of SEOM, the SADC Electoral Advisory Council (SEAC) undertook a goodwill and pre-deployment assessment mission to the Republic of Botswana, from 17 to 20 September 2014, in order to ascertain on the level of preparedness and readiness of the country to hold the forthcoming General Elections.

Indeed, the outcome of the 'Report of SEAC Goodwill and Pre-deployment Assessment Mission' concluded that, the political atmosphere and security environment are conducive for holding peaceful elections; and in respect to preparedness and readiness, the electoral management and administration bodies have undertaken the necessary provisions and preparations for holding the 2014 General Elections.

During the period leading to elections, the SADC Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM) will share information with other Election Observation Missions deployed in the country. In the same vein, consultations with stakeholders involved in the electoral process will be at the centre of our operations. This will enable us to stay abreast of the entire electoral process and ensure that we remain seized with the electoral environment and momentum.

In conclusion, I am pleased to announce that as mandated by the Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, as the Executive Secretary of SADC, I 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 Boipuso Hall. It is our hope that after the elections, we will come together again here at the same venue for the Mission to communicate its preliminary Statement and findings.

Distinguished invited Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is now my honour and privilege to introduce and invite the Head of the SADC Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM) to the 2014 General Elections in the Republic of Botswana, Honourable Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of South Africa, and Representative of His Excellency Jacob Zuma, President of the Republic of South Africa and Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, to now officially launch the Mission.

I thank you.

Muito Obrigado.

Merci Beucoup.

Kealeboga.