



**STATEMENT  
BY  
HONOURABLE DR. AUGUSTINE P. MAHIGA (MP), THE MINISTER  
OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND EAST AFRICAN COOPERATION OF  
THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA (URT)  
AND  
HEAD OF THE SADC ELECTORAL OBSERVATION MISSION (SEOM)  
TO  
THE 2017 NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS  
IN  
THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO**

**MASERU, 25 MAY, 2017**

Distinguished Members of the SADC Organ Troika;

Mr Jorge Cardoso, Director of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Affairs, SADC Secretariat;

Chairperson of the Independent Electoral Commission of the Kingdom of Lesotho;

Leaders and Representatives of Political Parties;

Heads of International Electoral Observation Missions;

Your Excellencies, Heads and Representatives of the Diplomatic Missions accredited to the Kingdom of Lesotho;

Members of the SADC Electoral Advisory Council;

SADC Election Observers;

Representatives of Local Election Observers;

Religious Leaders and Members of the Civil Society;

Members of the media;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

On behalf of His Excellency Dr John Pombe Joseph Magufuli, President of the United Republic of Tanzania and the Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, and on my own behalf, it is my honour and privilege to welcome you to the official launch of the SADC Electoral Observation Mission to the 2017 National Assembly Elections in the Kingdom of Lesotho.

## **Distinguished guests**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Our Mission to the Kingdom of Lesotho is at the invitation of the Independent Electoral Commission of the Kingdom of Lesotho. This practice is now part of the Treaty obligations in SADC which has also become part of our democratic culture and tradition in the SADC region. It is a practice in conformity with *the SADC Protocol on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation* and the revised *SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections (2015)*.

In compliance with this obligation, His Excellency Dr John Pombe Joseph Magufuli, President of the United Republic of Tanzania and Chairperson of the Organ on Politics, Defence, and Security Cooperation of SADC, constituted this Electoral Observation Mission and mandated the Executive Secretary of SADC to deploy the teams to observe the forthcoming parliamentary elections in the Kingdom of Lesotho, the third parliamentary elections to take place within less than five years. The observation mission which I have been mandated to lead consists of forty one (41) observers from nine SADC Member States.

Considerable preparatory work for the Mission was undertaken by the SADC Secretariat deploying in advance the SADC Electoral Advisory Council Goodwill Mission, followed by the SADC Electoral Observation Mission to meet and consult with the National Independent Electoral Commission and various local stakeholders on the electoral process in the Kingdom of Lesotho.

**Distinguished guests**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In this context, allow me to recognise the on-going work of the SADC Oversight Committee on the Kingdom of Lesotho which has been consulting with the stakeholders and Government of Lesotho with respect to the implementation of the Lesotho Reforms Programme as mandated by the SADC Summit of Heads of State and Government, with the cooperation of the Government of Lesotho. This is one of the critical interventions made by SADC prior to these elections to assist the Kingdom of Lesotho to stabilise its political system in the wake of previous political crises.

In similar vein, it is significant to note that the current National Assembly Elections in the Kingdom of Lesotho is yet another intervention by SADC Member States to assist the Kingdom to build and consolidate its democratic practices and institutions.

**Distinguished guests**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Over the last two decades, SADC has developed and adopted policy frameworks governing democratic elections as part of its overarching objective of ensuring peace, security and stability to underpin and enhance the process of regional integration in Southern Africa.

You will recall that on 20 July, 2015, the Ministerial Committee of the Organ adopted the revised *SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections*, which aim to strengthen our skills and capabilities

of assessing the major inter-related segments of the electoral cycle in order to provide stronger evidence-based recommendations and electoral assistance to Member States. These Sub-regional initiatives compliment the African Union Continental vision of entrenching democracy and good governance in its Member States.

Our revised Principles and Guidelines also enjoin us to employ several graduated phases to our deployment strategy – which covers the pre-election, election and post-election phases of the electoral process. The inter-related phases of deployment include the SADC Electoral Advisory Council Goodwill and pre-election assessment Missions; and the deployment of the Long Term Observers; and the Short Term Observers.

In this regard, the deployment of the SADC Electoral Advisory Council Goodwill Mission on 24 April 2017 was followed by the arrival of the Long Term Election Observation Mission on 18 May 2017, ahead of the main Short Term Electoral Observation Mission which arrived on 21 May 2017. The Long Term Observer Mission will last until 12 June 2017; or as the situation on the ground may demand.

According to the assessment of the SADC Electoral Advisory Council Goodwill Mission the Independent Electoral Commission of Lesotho has undertaken a range of inter-related essential pre-election preparatory activities for these National Assembly Elections. The advance work of both the SEAC Pre-election Mission; and the Over-Sight Committee, has provided an in-depth analysis of the political landscape in the country to enable an informed understanding of the political dynamics by the Electoral Observer Mission. This preliminary work by the two SADC

mechanisms will facilitate the observer mission to make an objective assessment of the electoral process and its outcomes.

## **Distinguished guests**

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

As indicated earlier, the work of the SADC Electoral Observation Mission is guided by the revised SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections adopted in 2015, which are aligned to the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (2007) and international human rights conventions of the United Nations. In addition, the work of the SADC Electoral Observation Mission will also be guided by the relevant legislation of Lesotho, such as her Constitution, which outlines the principles of universal adult suffrage, and defines the electoral systems and processes; as well as by the country's Electoral Laws. The emphasis of course, shall be on the provisions addressing the election of Members of Parliament.

Informed by these inter-related regional and national frameworks, the SADC Electoral Observation Mission will assess the conduct of the elections against a set of central principles stipulated in the revised SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections such as:

1. Full participation of the citizens in the political process;
2. Freedom of association;
3. Political tolerance;
4. Equal opportunity for all political parties to access the state media;

5. Equal opportunity to exercise the right to vote and be voted for;
6. Independence of the Judiciary and impartiality of the electoral institutions;
7. Civic and Voter education;
8. Acceptance and respect of the election results by political parties as proclaimed to have been free and fair by the competent Electoral Commission in accordance with the law of the land;  
and
9. Challenge of the election results as provided for in the law.

**Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Allow me to further explain the role of the SADC Electoral Advisory Council whose arrival preceded that of the SADC Electoral Observation Mission. You will recall that the SADC Electoral Advisory Council was established by the SADC Summit in 2005 to advise on matters of elections, democracy and good governance. The SADC Electoral Advisory Council is composed of eminent Justices, senior advocates and distinguished scholars with immense experience in matters of democracy building and governance. As is the culture, the objective of the SADC Electoral Advisory Council Goodwill Mission was to assess the level of readiness and preparedness of the Kingdom of Lesotho to hold these elections.

We are, hence, reliably informed by the SADC Electoral Advisory Council Mission that the Independent Electoral Commission and the relevant stakeholders in the Kingdom of Lesotho have taken necessary

measures to ensure that the *Principles for Conducting Democratic Elections* as outlined in the revised SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections, are observed. We therefore conclude that the Kingdom of Lesotho is generally prepared to hold elections on 3 June, 2017.

**Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

As SADC observes these elections, it encourages the Independent Electoral Commission of Lesotho to conduct its work to the highest professional standard; the political leadership to play an exemplary role in terms of electoral conduct; and the electorate to act conscientiously and honourably.

It is evident from our extended presence on the ground in the Kingdom of Lesotho that the resolution of the political and security problems is not entirely predicated upon the elections and its outcomes. Clearly, there has to be stronger and time-bound commitment to broader reforms in the political, security and public sectors in order to stabilise the country.

It is our considered view that holding three elections within five years is a clear indication that the constitutional and institutional reforms need to be implemented in order to bring stability and predictability to the political system. SADC Member States have consistently urged the leadership in Lesotho to institute reforms in order to stabilize the government. We believe the hesitation and delay in implementing those reforms has greatly contributed to the current and previous crisis in the government.

In this regard, we take note of the very the significant *Commitment by Lesotho's Parties to an Inclusive, Participatory and Comprehensive Reforms Process* witnessed by the Heads of the Christian Churches of Lesotho, the Independent Electoral Commission of Lesotho, SADC, and other regional and international organisations on 6<sup>th</sup> April, 2017. In the *Commitment*, Political parties pledged that regardless of the outcome of the 2017 National Assembly Elections, among other things, they shall uphold the following:

-In the pre-election period, to publicly speak out in favour of an inclusive, participatory, democratic and transparent process for the institution of wide ranging institutional and sector reforms;

- in the post-election period, to prioritise the implementation of the following reforms; Constitutional, Parliamentary, Security Sector, Judicial and Public Service;

- as well as prioritise the holding of a post-election national dialogue that will lead to a consensus on how to implement the reforms guaranteed by appropriate legislation.

**Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In addition to the said *Commitment*, Political parties also pledged to;

- a) Honour the constitution and laws of Lesotho;
- b) Adhere to the Electoral Code of Conduct;
- c) Honour the institutions of governance of Lesotho;

These are important commitments toward ensuring that both the pre-election and post-election periods are not only occasioned by peace and calm; and the rule of law; but also, that, as soon as possible, the institutional reform process is accelerated in a sustainable fashion; and brought to a timely conclusion.

However, pledges demand commitment in implementation as the measure of integrity by the leadership and other stakeholders. After three elections within less than five years the fatigued voters deserve a different and durable outcome. SADC will definitely take these pledges and commitments seriously in supporting the reform process in the Kingdom of Lesotho by the next government.

**Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Allow me to add that it is strange paradox indeed that on this 25<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2017 marking the historical occasion of the Commemoration of the founding of the Organisation of African Unity; when we should ordinarily be celebrating milestones in the advancement of our societies and the consolidation of our democratic institutions; we are still locked in protracted debates on the basic requirements of forming and stabilizing governments. After more than fifty years of independent states in Africa, we are at a stage when we should be bequeathing to the next generations governance structures for sustainable development for our people.

**Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Finally, may I also take this opportunity to invite you all to attend the release of our Preliminary Statement scheduled for 5 June 2017, at 1100hrs, at this very Venue.

**Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is now my singular honour, on behalf of the Chairperson of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, His Excellency Dr John Pombe Joseph Magufuli, President of the Republic of the United Republic of Tanzania, to declare the SADC Electoral Observation Mission to the 2017 National Assembly Elections in the Kingdom of Lesotho, officially launched.

Thank you very much

Merci beaucoup

Asante Sana