



**STATEMENT ON THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE SADC
ELECTORAL OBSERVATION MISSION (SEOM) TO THE 2013 2nd
ROUND OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS AND LEGISLATIVE
ELECTIONS**

IN

THE REPUBLIC OF MADAGASCAR

BY

**DR. THEMBINKOSI MHLONGO
SADC DEPUTY EXECUTIVE-SECRETARY FOR REGIONAL
INTEGRATION**

ANTANANARIVO, 9 DECEMBER 2013

- Honourable Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Namibia, Chairperson of SADC Ministerial Committee of the Organ on Politics, Defense and Security Cooperation (MCO); and Head of the SADC Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM) to the Republic of Madagascar 2013 2nd Round of the Presidential Elections and Legislative Elections;
- The Chairperson of the Independent National Electoral Commission of the Transition (CENI-T);
- Representatives of Political Parties and Associations;
- Representatives of the International Contact Group on Madagascar (ICG-M);
- Election Observation Missions;
- Your Excellences, Heads of Diplomatic Missions accredited to the Republic of Madagascar;
- Members of the Diplomatic Corps;
- Religious leaders;
- Members of the Civil Society;
- Members of the media;
- Ladies and gentlemen.

On behalf of the SADC Executive-Secretary, Her Excellency Dr. Stergomena Lawrence Tax, it is for me a privilege and honor to welcome you to this gathering on the occasion of the launch of the SADC Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM) to the 2013 2nd Round of the Presidential Elections and Legislative Elections, in the Republic of Madagascar, scheduled for 20 December 2013. Allow me to also take this opportunity to express our gratitude for grace us with your presence in this event.

In accordance with the provisions of the 'SADC Treaty', 'SADC Protocol on Political, Defense and Security Cooperation' and 'SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections'; the Republic of Madagascar invited SADC to observe the 2013 Presidential and Legislative Elections. To that effect, the Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, His Excellency Hifikepunye Pohamba, President of the Republic of Namibia, has constituted the SADC Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM) to observe the 2nd Round of the Presidential Elections and Legislative Elections in the Republic of Madagascar, scheduled for 20 November 2013.

In this regard, as we did in October 2013, for the 1st Round of the Presidential Elections; today we are officially launching, in this very same venue, the SADC Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM) constituted by Observers from various Member States that will be deployed throughout the country during the elections.

Indeed, for SADC the success of the present elections is of paramount importance, due to the fact that it will culminate the process of implementation of the Roadmap, thus paving the way for the return of Madagascar to constitutional normalcy and to the International Community as well. It is in this context, that SADC will deploy a sizable number of Election Observers in the country.

As SADC family we are pleased to have witnessed the holding of peaceful 1st Round of the Presidential Elections, thus showing maturity of Malagasy people as well as spirit of national reconciliation which is a corner stone for a 'new beginning' and rebuilding the country. In the same vein, we would like to express our appreciation to the political stakeholders for showing their commitment to the spirit and letter of the Roadmap.

On national reconciliation and healing, as we are mourning a greatest son of Africa, Nelson Mandela our beloved Madiba, allow me to share with you some of his words of wisdom, I quote:

“... I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons will live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. ...”

For the people of Madagascar and the Region as whole, let us have the example of Madiba's life and vision of society as a source for our inspiration and driving force regarding reconciliation and rebuilding our nations.

From what we have witnessed during the 1st Round of the Presidential Elections, it is our hope and believe that the spirit which guided the Malagasy political stakeholders to negotiate and sign the Roadmap in Antananarivo, on 15 September 2011, with the aim to return the country to a constitutional normalcy and rebuild the nation will prevail in this crucial moment of endeavour to get the country out of the present political and socio-economic crisis, which caused serious adverse consequences to the Malagasy people.

A word of appreciation also goes to the efforts deployed by all parties engaged in the quest for a solution to achieve durable peace in Madagascar, in particular, the parties to the Roadmap, the Malagasy people, the SADC Mediator, the African Union (AU); the International Contact Group on Madagascar (ICG-M) and the International Community, in general; that enabled progress in the implementation of the Roadmap, attaining the current and crucial stage of holding Presidential and Legislative Elections.

The success of the current 2013 Presidential and Legislative Elections will mark a 'new beginning' towards tolerance, national reconciliation and reconstruction as well as development in Madagascar. In the past recent years, throughout its history, Madagascar has gone through post-election crisis that culminated in an unconstitutional overthrow of a legitimate government in 2008, leading to the present mediation process led by SADC in conjunction with AU and the International Community through the International Contact Group on Madagascar (ICG-M).

SADC is committed to continuously consolidate peace, security and political stability and enhancement of democracy in the Region in order to eradicate poverty, promote economic growth and sustainable development.

To that effect, it is worthwhile to state that SADC Member States in the process of enhancement of Democracy in the Region have rooted and entrenched the universal values and principles of democracy, respect for human rights and adherence to the principle of the rule of law.

At this juncture, it is equally important to underscore that for a peaceful, free, fair, transparent and credible electoral process; the dissemination of democratic values and principles among all relevant stakeholders and society in general is responsibility of all stakeholders.

The presence of the SADC Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM) in the Republic of Madagascar is not only to support the democratic process in the country, but 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 SEOM will deploy a sizeable number of Observers from the SADC Member States as well as from SADC Diplomatic Missions accredited to the Republic of Madagascar, thus, allowing the Mission to cover extensively the electoral process in the country before, during and after the Elections.

In addition to the 'SADC Treaty', 'SADC Protocol on Political, Defense and Security Cooperation' and the 'SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections', the conduct of the Mission will be guided by the relevant legislation of the Republic of Madagascar and other relevant continental international instruments governing democratic elections.

Once again, as a part of the best practices and aiming at enhancing reliability and validity of its findings, the SADC Electoral Observation Mission will share information with other Election Observation Missions in the country. In this respect, consultations with stakeholders involved in the process will be ongoing and undertaken by the Mission in order to be seized with the electoral environment and momentum.

I would like to take this opportunity to inform you that the activities of the SADC Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM) in the Republic of Madagascar will be conducted from its Headquarters at the **HOTEL IBIS ANTANANARIVO ANKORONDRANO**, in Antananarivo.

It is our expectation that, after the election observation exercise, we will gather once again here at the same venue for the Mission to present its findings and Preliminary Statement on the 2013 2nd Round of the Presidential Elections and Legislative Elections in Madagascar.

With these remarks, it is now my honor and privilege to introduce and invite the Head of the SADC Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM) to the 2013 2nd Round of the Presidential Elections and Legislative Elections in the Republic of Madagascar, Honorable Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Namibia;

Chairperson of SADC Ministerial Committee of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation (MCO); and also Representative of His Excellency Hifikepunye Pohamba, President of the Republic of Namibia and Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, to now officially launch the Mission.

I thank you very much.