LAUNCH STATEMENT

BY

HONOURABLE JOSEPH MALANJI, M.P., MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA

AND

HEAD OF THE SADC ELECTORAL OBSERVATION MISSION (SEOM)

TO

THE 2018 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

IN

THE REPUBLIC OF MADAGASCAR

ANTANANARIVO, 29 OCTOBER 2018
Distinguished Members of the SADC Organ Troika;

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

Chairperson and Members of the Independent National Electoral Commission;

Distinguished Heads of International Electoral Observation Missions;

Your Excellencies, Heads and Representatives of the Diplomatic Missions accredited to the Republic of Madagascar;

Members of the SADC Electoral Advisory Council;

SADC Election Observers;

Leaders and Representatives of Political Parties;

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 Mr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu, President of the Republic of Zambia, and the Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, it is my honour and privilege to welcome you to the official launch of the SADC Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM) to the 7th November, 2018 Presidential Election in the Republic of Madagascar.
Distinguished guests
Ladies and Gentlemen,


To this end, H.E. Mr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu, President of the Republic of Zambia, and Chairperson of the Organ, constituted the SADC Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM) and mandated the Executive Secretary of SADC to prepare the logistics for its deployment to the Republic of Madagascar.

Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Although this Mission focuses on the Presidential Election, I would like to mention that SADC has been involved in several initiatives aimed at implementing long-lasting solutions to the political challenges that the Republic of Madagascar has faced since 2009.

In this respect, these initiatives led the country to peaceful elections in 2013 under the able facilitation of SADC Special Envoy to Madagascar, H.E. Former President Joaquim Chissano, who will also be part of the SEOM. With the collaboration of the African Union, the United Nations and local mediators, SADC continues to support the Republic of Madagascar to enhance its political and governance institutions.
To this end, the conduct of the forthcoming Presidential Election should, therefore, be viewed in the context of these on-going initiatives that are designed to bring lasting political stability to the country.

**Distinguished guests,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

As mentioned earlier, SADC observes elections in its Member States based on the *Revised SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections*. The Principles and Guidelines are also informed by key instruments of the African Union such as the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (2007) as well as relevant Conventions of the United Nations. All SADC Member States affirmed their commitment to the implementation of the SADC Principles and Guidelines.

**Distinguished guests**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In line with the SADC Principles and Guidelines, the present deployment of the SEOM was preceded by a Pre-Election Assessment and Goodwill Mission of the SADC Electoral Advisory Council (SEAC) from 24-30 September 2018.

The SEAC mission noted, among other issues, that while CENI had set itself a target of registering 10 million voters for this Presidential Election, the EMB managed a commendable result of 9, 913, 599 voters. The CENI also subjected the voters’ register to the peer review of the International Organisation of La Francophonie.
The SEAC Mission further noted that CENI had largely taken measures to ensure adherence with the SADC Principles and Guidelines, specifically Section 4 thereof, which outlines the critical principles defining the conduct of democratic elections.

The SEAC mission also had the opportunity to interact with various political stakeholders, and noted their concerns, including the following;

(i) Perceptions that this period of the year is susceptible to weather and health conditions that may affect the smooth conduct of the election;

(ii) Fears of vote buying in regions that are difficult to access, or out of reach for election monitors and observers;

(iii) Allegations that the media is captured by the interests of candidates with more financial resources than others; and

(iv) Some presidential candidates are opposed to the holding of this election, demanding amongst others, the re-opening of the electoral list.

Distinguished guests

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Following the successful holding of the 2013 elections, the SEOM made the following recommendations:

(i) Domestication of the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections;

(ii) Establishment of a permanent independent national electoral commission;
(iii) Timely civic and voter education to be conducted by the electoral commission, political parties and other relevant stakeholders;

(iv) Training of political party and candidate agents;

(v) Continuous voter registration and updating of the voter’s roll;

(vi) Continued political dialogue and reconciliation;

(vii) Restoration of the independent media regulatory body; and

(viii) Formulation of a legal framework to regulate political campaign finances.

The SEOM is pleased to recognise the following positive strides that have since been made by the Republic of Madagascar to improve the electoral system:

(i) The improvements to the laws relevant to the electoral system by incorporating key elements of the SADC Principles and Guidelines;

(ii) Establishment, through legislation, of a permanent independent national electoral commission in the form of the CENI; and

(iii) The design and delivery of voter education by the CENI and other relevant stakeholders.

SADC would wish to reiterate the need for the Republic of Madagascar to implement the rest of the recommendations arising from the elections of 2013.
Distinguished guests
Ladies and Gentlemen,

While the over-arching framework for SEOM’s electoral observation is based on the Revised SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections, it must be noted that the Mission is also guided by the Constitution of the Republic of Madagascar.

Other instruments include the Act governing the Election of the President, the General Regime of Elections and Referenda, and the Act on the Independent National Electoral Commission.

In line with 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, assembly and expression;

3. Measures to prevent corruption, bribery, political violence, intimidation and intolerance;

4. Equal opportunity for all political parties to access the State Media;

5. Respect for values of electoral justice;

6. No undue restraints against the opportunity to exercise the right to vote and be voted for;
7. Independence of the Judiciary and impartiality of the electoral institutions;

8. Civic and Voter education;

9. Acceptance of and respect for the election results by political parties as proclaimed to have been free, fair, transparent, credible and peaceful by the competent Electoral Commission in accordance with the law of the land; and

10. Provision of electoral justice through expedient settlement of electoral disputes as provided for in the law.

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to inform you that the SADC Electoral Observation Mission to the 2018 Presidential Election consists, in total, of 53 personnel from 11 SADC Member States namely Angola, Botswana, DRC, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Our observers will be deployed to 10 regions out of the 22 regions, namely, Analamanga, Diana, Sava, Analanjirofo, Anosy, Atsimo Andrefana, Haute Matsiatra, Vakinankaratra, Atsinanana, and Amoron’I Mania. Our observations will focus on the pre-election period which includes the campaigns, the voting day and the process of the counting of the ballot papers.
May I, therefore, encourage all stakeholders to ensure that this Presidential Election is managed in a peaceful, free, fair, transparent and credible manner. We look forward to an electoral process that adheres to democratic values and principles envisioned in our SADC Treaty, the Protocol of Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation; and the revised SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections.

Lastly, may I also take this opportunity to invite you all to attend the release of our Preliminary Statement regarding our observations of the 2018 Presidential Election, scheduled for 9 November 2018, 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, H.E Edgar Chagwa Lungu, President of the Republic of Zambia to declare the SADC Electoral Observation Mission to the 2018 Presidential Election in the Republic of Madagascar, officially launched.

Thank you very much
Muito Obrigado
Merci beaucoup
Misaotra tompoko