



LAUNCH STATEMENT

BY

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

AND

HEAD OF THE SADC ELECTORAL OBSERVATION MISSION (SEOM)

TO

**THE 2019 PRESIDENTIAL, PARLIAMENTARY AND LOCAL
GOVERNMENT (TRIPARTITE) ELECTIONS**

IN

THE REPUBLIC OF MALAWI

LILONGWE, 11 MAY 2019

Honourable Dr. Kalombo Mwansa, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs and my Alternate to the SEOM in Malawi;

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

Distinguished Members of the SADC Organ Troika;

Justice Dr Jane Ansah, Chairperson of the Malawi Electoral Commission (or her representatives);

Members of the SADC Electoral Advisory Council;

Head of Mission of the African Union Observation Mission;

His Excellency, Mr Thabo Mbeki, former President of the Republic of South Africa and Head of Mission of the Commonwealth Observation Mission;

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

UNDP Resident Coordinator and UN Representative to Malawi;

Development Partners and International Organisations;

Representatives of International Electoral Observation Missions;

Senior Government Officials, and representatives of various government departments and agencies;

Secretaries-General, leaders and representatives of political parties;

Paramount Chiefs and all traditional leaders here present;

Religious Leaders and representatives of Civil Society organisations;

Representatives of Local Election Observation missions;

Members of the media;

SADC Election Observers;

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 singular honour and privilege, to welcome you all to the official launch of the SADC Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM) to the 21st May, 2019 Tripartite Elections of the Republic of Malawi.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen;

The SADC Electoral Observation Mission is here at the invitation of the Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC). The practice of observing national elections in the Southern African Development Community is in conformity with the SADC Treaty; *the SADC Protocol on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation* and the revised *SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections of 2015*.

To this end, the Chairperson of the SADC Organ, H.E. Mr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu has constituted the SADC Electoral Observation Mission to the 2019 Tripartite Elections in Malawi, which I have the privilege of leading, on his behalf.

Over the last 25 years since the first general elections which introduced multiparty politics to the Republic of Malawi in 1994, the country has progressed well, expanding its democracy through subsequent multiparty elections. SADC duly recognises and acknowledges these tremendous strides toward the strengthening of democracy in Malawi.

In this regard, let me take this opportunity, as Head of the SEOM to Malawi, to extend our sincere congratulations to the people of Malawi, as the country celebrates 25 years of democracy: a significant milestone towards the consolidation of democracy in the region.

The pre-election period for the 2019 Tripartite Elections in Malawi has not been immune from challenges, the most recent and devastating being the effects of cyclone Idai on the country.

In this regard, we reiterate our deepest condolences to the people of the Republic of Malawi for the devastation caused by cyclone Idai.

We sincerely regret the loss of life, displacement of citizens, loss of property and personal belongings, which includes the loss of voters' cards and identity documents.

We are, however, encouraged by the efforts of the Malawi Electoral Commission to ensure that registered voters who lost their voter registration cards during the cyclone, will be allowed to vote.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen;

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 have affirmed their commitment to the implementation of the revised *SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections*.

These have been designed to not only assist the region to improve its democratic processes, but also to contribute towards conflict prevention using modern standards and techniques in election observation.

These include the use of the long-term election observation methodology and new technologies to enhance data collection, analysis and reporting.

This approach is expected to engender informed assessments of electoral processes and outcomes that should contribute to enhanced regional efforts.

These efforts assist Member States in adopting best practices and addressing related challenges, through evidence-based qualitative and quantitative observation methodologies.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen;

In view of the above, and consistent with the revised *SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections*, I am pleased to inform you that the deployment of this SEOM was preceded by a Pre-Election Assessment Goodwill Mission of the SADC Electoral Advisory Council (SEAC) from 4 to 8 April 2019.

The SEAC is a mechanism instituted by the SADC Summit in 2005, composed of eminent legal experts, scholars and retired senior diplomats, to advise the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation on matters of elections, democracy and governance; as well as on mediation strategies arising from election related conflicts.

In this regard, the SEAC Mission to the Republic of Malawi noted, among other issues, that the Malawi Electoral Commission had designed and substantively implemented an elaborate electoral calendar.

This calendar makes provision for, amongst others, accreditation of election observers, registration and inspection of the voters' register, distribution of election materials, civic and voter education and announcement of the results.

The Mission further noted that the Malawi Electoral Commission has done the following:

1. Registered 6.8 million voters;
2. Put in place the required arrangements to allow for the voting of 2,709 Ward Councillor candidates; 1,329 Parliamentary candidates and 7 Presidential candidates (these are the figures that have been availed to SADC as of now); and
3. In this regard, the MEC prepared 5,002 voting stations and an additional 11,095 streaming points with a capacity to service 800 voters. The locations of these voting stations have been publicised ahead of the elections.

The May 21st 2019 Elections in Malawi are governed by the Constitution of the Republic of Malawi; the Electoral Commission Act; the Parliamentary and Presidential Elections Act; the Local Government Elections Act and the Political Parties (Registration and Regulation) Act.

In line with this domestic legal framework, the SEOM will assess the conduct of the electoral process in accordance with the revised *SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections of 2015*, which include the following:

1. Full participation of the citizens in the democratic and development processes;
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 expeditious settlement of electoral disputes as provided for in the law.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen;

Our Observers will cover all the three Regions and the 27 of the 28 Districts of Malawi, focusing on the following:

- a) The Pre, During and Post-election phases;
- b) The security situation and overall state of preparedness of the MEC;
- c) Training of polling staff and presiding officers;
- d) Timely distribution of election materials to various polling centres;
- e) Timely setting up of polling stations and tally centres; and
- f) Polling day and the actual voting process; closing of polling stations; counting and tallying of votes.

As there are only days left before polling day, may I, therefore, take this opportunity to encourage all stakeholders to ensure that these elections are conducted in a peaceful and secure environment.

As SADC, it is our hope that the electoral process will adhere to democratic values and principles envisioned in our SADC Treaty; in the Protocol on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, as well as the revised SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections.

Finally, the SADC Preliminary Statement outlining our key observations on the 2019 Tripartite Elections is scheduled for 23rd May 2019 at this very venue. I, therefore, would like to take this opportunity to cordially invite you all to attend.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen;

It is now my honour, on behalf of the Chairperson of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, H.E Mr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu, President of the Republic of Zambia, to declare the SADC Electoral Observation Mission to the 2019 Tripartite Elections in the Republic of Malawi, officially launched.

Thank you very much

Muito Obrigado

Merci beaucoup

Zikomo Kwambiri